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**HEREWARD**



# HERWARD

*A TRAGEDY*

IN A PROLOGUE AND FOUR ACTS

BY

WILLIAM AKERMAN

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1903

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TO MY DEAR WIFE

173525



**TO MY DEAR WIFE**

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## PREFACE

THE subject of Hereward for a play was originally suggested to me by Charles Kingsley's novel, "Hereward the Wake." The study of a man made by one woman, unmade by another, and eventually, in spite of his broken faith, purchasing redemption by his suffering and death, appealed to me as an extremely interesting one dramatically. I was curious also to experiment how far it was possible to retain the sympathy of an audience for a hero under these conditions.

It was impossible for stage purposes to make use of all the reported circumstances in Hereward's half-mythical career. I have only used those that are necessary for the main purpose of my story. For the same reason I have suppressed the long period of fighting in Ely, this presumably having taken place between Acts II. and III.

Meanwhile, I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to make my intervals between the Acts correspond with

what is known definitely of Hereward's history, and for this purpose I have followed Freeman's final summing up of the probable facts concerning him as set forth in the *Norman Conquest*.

My poem is intended for stage representation. The stage rights for all countries have been protected. I am indebted to the kindness of the Rev. W. F. J. Romanis, of Charterhouse, Godalming, for the Latin verse in Act II.

TO MY READER.

*Reader, when I who this indite  
Pass from the brief day into night,  
And know no more the fragile breath  
That fashions fame to life or death,  
If all I writ must be forgot,  
And soul with body left to rot,  
Let these lines with the others lie,  
We shall not meet then, you and I!*

*But if I live in that sure sense  
Of Thought's supreme omnipotence,  
And on this page your eyes should fall,  
Know that I drank Life's pleasures all,  
That I too fretted at Life's chain,  
Tasted its passions and its pain,  
And that this deathless soul of me  
Speaks here, from out the page, to thee!*

--





## CHARACTERS

### *In the Prologue*

HEREWARD (a Saxon)

HERLUIN (a Priest)

SURTURBRAND (a Viking)

MARTIN LIGHTFOOT (a Serving Man)

LADY GODIVA (Hereward's Mother)

Lady Godiva's Bower Maidens. Saxon Archers,  
Men-at-Arms, and Serving-Men.

### *In the Play*

EARL BALDWIN (Count of Flanders)

DE CRESPIGNY

BERTRAND } (Flemish Knights)

FLORIAN

SYGTRYG (a Northumbrian)

A MAN-AT-ARMS

IVO TAILLEBOIS

ASCELIN } (Norman Knights)

RAOUL DE DOL

WINTER } (Saxon Squires)

GERI

SURTURBRAND (a Viking)

x.

THOROLD (a Norman Abbot)  
HERLUIN (a Norman Monk)  
BRAND (a Saxon Monk)  
ULFTEKYL (Bishop of Crowland)  
MARTIN LIGHTFOOT

and

HEREWARD.

COUNTESS ADELA (Wife of Count Baldwin)  
ALFTRUDA (Ward of King William)  
and

TORFRIDA (Hereward's Wife)

Vikings, Norman and Saxon Soldiers, Saxon Archers,  
Monks, Serving-Men, Ladies-in-Waiting, &c.

PROLOGUE.—Lady Godiva's Hall at Bourne.

ACT I.—The Coast of Flanders.

ACT II.—Peterborough Minster.

ACT III.—The Forest of Brundeswald.

ACT IV.—Hereward's Castle at Bourne.

*A period of some years elapses between the Prologue  
and AEt I.; of four years between AEt I. and II.; of one  
year between AEt II. and III.; and some months between  
AEt III. and IV.*

# HERWARD

## PROLOGUE

SCENE.—*An old Saxon Hall. Floor strewn with rushes. Open fire-place. Walls hung with implements and trophies of the chase. Otherwise bare. Open door at back looking over landscape of marsh and fen, with forests topping the hills in the distance. LADY GODIVA discovered seated on raised dais, surrounded by her bower maidens. HERLUIN, the Prior, on her right hand. Huntsmen and attendants grouped about the hall.*

*Lady G.* Hereward, always Hereward ! Unbosom thee,  
And by my sinful body, holy father,  
Thou shalt have justice done thee !

*Herl.* List my tale,  
Which all the holy saints be witnesses  
I fairly will deliver ! As I journeyed  
Hither to Bourne from Peterborough, wrapt  
In pious meditation, chastening  
By constant prayer this carnal tabernacle,  
Out from a wood that bordered on the way  
Sprang my lord Hereward, attended by  
Winter and Geri, and the boon companions  
That pack with him in taverns. Sighting me,  
“ Ho ! ” my lord Hereward cries, “ a shaveling priest,”

"A leech, a blood-sucker"! They dragged me, lady,  
Straight from my palfrey, and first one, then the other,  
Fell to so mercilessly beating me  
I lay within the mire!

*Lady G.* Oh, godless boy!  
Is't possible?

*Herl.* Nay, hear what followed after.  
Lord Hereward, seizing upon my wallet,  
Which lay upon the ground, thrust into it  
His impious hand, and crying, "Here is measure  
To moisten our parched throats with," stole from me  
The sixteen silver pennies I had vowed  
Unto St. Peter's service!

*Lady G.* Gracious Heaven,  
His lawless arm, the scourge of all things human,  
Turns even against thee!

*Herl.* Most noble lady!—

*Lady G.* Silence, good father! Is it not sufficient  
That Hereward, the earl's son, is reputed  
For gaming, fighting, drinking, and rude brawls,  
To be a most notorious offender?  
Is it not common gossip that King Edward,  
Elect of God, and blessed of his apostles,  
Hearing of this my son's ungodly license  
Hath summoned to him my lord Leofric,  
And that the Saxon Witan meet together  
To sit in judgment on him?

*Herl.* True, dear lady !

*Lady G.* Father, our sainted monarch hath despatched  
Into our hands a warrant, which conveys  
To Leofric my lord, the Earl of Mercia,  
Full power to deal with this rebellious subject ;  
Further, my lord hath laid it on my soul,  
An Hereward be still impenitent,  
To publicly proclaim him to all people  
A thief and outlaw !

*Herl.* Art thou resolute ?

*Lady G.* This flesh that did beget him shall be scourged  
By my own hand ere I go back on it !  
Bid my lord Hereward within !

*(One of the huntsmen exits)*

*Herl.* Dear lady,  
One may be over bold !

*Lady G.* Thou errest surely  
Upon so just a cause !

*Herl.* The cause, dear lady,  
Is sanctified and holy ; but lord Hereward  
Is such a firebrand, hath so hot a blood !—

*(HEREWARD enters swaggering through the door at  
back, and pauses, looking at his mother)*

*Here.* Madam ! You sent for me !

*Lady G.* Come hither, Hereward !  
Say, art thou son of mine ?

*Here.* That issue lies

Betwixt thee and my father !

*Lady G.* Insolent !

Would'st have thy tongue slit ?

*Here.* Mercy on us, mother !

*Lady G.* Wolf that thou art, see'st thou this shorn  
lamb

Thy fangs have fastened on ? (*She points to Herluin*)

*Here.* This shaven priest,

Dare he impeach me ?

*Lady G.* Dare he !

*Herl.* Sancta Maria !

(*HERLUIN shrinks behind LADY GODIVA*)

*Here.* Sancta Maria ! Shall I discipline thee  
(*As if to strike him*)

Again, thou creeping thing ?

*Lady G.* Hold, Hereward !

The tales of thy misdeeds have hourly clamoured  
About mine ears ; 'twas but the mother in me  
That silenced them. This last offence of thine  
Flies in the face of Heaven. Thou hast stricken  
At God thro' this His instrument !

*Here.* 'Tis impious

To christen such as this an instrument  
Of any but the devil !

*Lady G.* Wilt deny

Thou took'st from him with brutal violence  
St. Peter's holy pence ?

*Here.*                               What an I did?  
How many are the manors and fat pastures  
He and his holy brethren have pilfered  
From you and from my father?

*Lady G.*                               Guilty boy,  
Thy hand is stained with sacrilege; these monies  
Our church had consecrated and ordained  
Unto God's service!

*Here.*                               They were once in service  
To me and mine, and like good chickens, mother,  
Come home to roost.

*Herl.*                               Beware, Lord Hereward,  
The church shall lay her hands on thee!

*Here.*   She dare not.  
Hath she not tried already? Hast forgot  
How you sought daily of my mother here  
To make a monk's man of me, mew me up,  
Away from marsh and fen and merry greenwood,  
Within a mouldy cloister? Hast forgot  
How Winter, Geri, and I stole to the chancel  
Ere service was begun, and set your psalters  
All upside down, which threw your holy fathers  
Into a state so godless and confounded,  
They would have flogged me? Do you hear me, villain?  
An English man, an Earl's son born and bred,  
Flogged by a French priest! But we were equal to you;  
Boys that we were, we fortified ourselves

On a peat stack, where, for an hour or more,  
With but a kitchen spit to battle with,  
We kept the whole conventicle at bay,  
Till you, you rat, cried, "Fire the peat beneath them;  
Drive them out so." Look for the day, Sir Prior,  
I come again amongst you, and demand  
My reckoning. By all the saints in the calendar  
I'll kindle such a blaze above your heads  
There's not a French priest, 'mid the pack of you,  
That shall escape a roasting!

*Lady G.* Hereward!

Knowest thou not upon what weighty summons  
Thy father hied him hence to Westminster?

*Here.* I know it well! What traffic hath my father,  
An English earl, aye, every inch of him,  
With this stale hawk, this kite, this kestrel king,  
This monk, not monarch?

*Herl.* Treason, noble lady!

*Lady G.* Boy, they will outlaw thee, thou'lt be pro-  
scribed,

And every hand against thee!

*Here.* What care I?

Where is the man's hand that can harder hit  
Than Hereward's, or where the foolish head  
Will take a buffet from him? Who can bend  
The bow like Hereward, or further fling  
The ponderous hammer?



*Lady G.* Nay, are these the sports  
My son, an earl's son, makes his glory in ?  
There's not a clown upon the village green  
May hold him not thine equal !

*Here.* That is not justice :  
These sports be English sports, and English sports  
Breed English men.

*Lady G.* Men !

*Here.* English men, good madam.  
And for your popinjays and sprigs of fashion,  
There's not a knight thro' all the country side  
Hath found him man enough at joust or tourney  
To strike me to my knee !

*Lady G.* A noble knight  
Braggs not in ladies' presence, boastful boy,  
Thou yet shalt live to learn the lesson of it  
From other lips than mine !

*Here.* Wilt swear to it ?  
I'll be an outlaw, sea thief, Kempery man,  
As stout hearts were before me ! I am fashioned  
From the tough oak that grows in Brundeswald,  
The same that built my glorious ancestors,  
Daredevils, Bersekers, and Norsemen all,  
Long ships to sail in ! I will vie with Hardraade,  
The lion-hearted Harold—slay, as he slew,  
Witch-wives, wehr-wolves, and many-headed dragons,  
And having overcome by land and water

All men and devils, woo a Kaiser's daughter  
And marry her!

(SURTURBRAND, *an old Viking, steps out from the fire  
and advances to the foot of the dais.*)

*Sur.* Ahoi, my Berseker!

Ahoi, my sea-cock! By Thor's hammer, madam,  
'Twas bravely spoken! I have sailed the swan's bath  
With sturdy Robert Frischof, aye and oft  
With the great Godwin! We had readier methods  
To tame these wild young bloods! Set him afloat,  
A couple of long ships, three score or more  
Of stout arms from the Danelagh, I warrant me  
He'll fight his way the world through!

*Lady G.* Peace, I say!

Hereward, wilt thou humble thy proud heart,  
And making full confession of thy sin,  
Implore this holy father intercede,  
And find thee peace with heaven?

*Here.* By St. Peter,

His patron saint, I sooner would deliver  
My body to be burnt up to a cinder,  
As his will be hereafter!

*Herl.* I pronounce thee—

(*LADY GODIVA motions to HERLUIN to be silent.*)

*Lady G.* Is this thy only answer, Hereward?

*Here.* My only answer!

*Lady G.* God have mercy, sinner,

On thy young soul ! By this, the royal warrant,  
 (LADY GODIVA *unfolds a warrant with the royal  
 seal attached*)

I do proclaim thee henceforth banished  
 Beyond the seas, and be thy body found  
 Within three days in this the Danelagh,  
 Thou dost declare thyself an enemy  
 Unto the public peace, and it shall be  
 Lawful for every man that comes upon thee  
 To turn his hand against thee !

(MARTIN LIGHTFOOT, *a half-witted servant, ap-  
 proaches HERWARD*)

*Light.* Master Hereward,  
 I'll follow thee !

*Lady G.* Who is this saucy fellow ?

*Herl.* Leave him to me ; I know him, noble lady,  
 'Tis Martin Lightfoot, a most cunning rogue,  
 With some clerk's learning too ; I am informed  
 There is suspicion on him for a monk,  
 A fugitive from justice !

(MARTIN LIGHTFOOT *shrinks terrified behind  
 HERWARD*)

*Light.* 'Tis a lie !  
 A monk's lie ! Shelter me, lord Hereward,  
 No monk am I !

*Lady G.* We'll search him ! Bring him hither !  
 (*No one attempts to move*)

D'you hear me, knaves! What hath bewitched you all?  
Fear of this boy?

*Here.* Part fear, part pity, madam,  
Not one of them's my mother!

*Lady G.* I'll not trifle,  
Son though thou be of mine, betwixt my conscience  
And sin's foul countenance!

*Here.* Be careful, madam,  
Conscience plays scurvy tricks with all of us,  
When the devil's at our elbow!

*(The retainers attempt to approach MARTIN)*

Nay, stand back there;  
This man is my man, and there's no man living  
Dare lay a hand upon him!

*Lady G.* Let him pass,  
And go thou with him: best it is for both of us  
That in this world of sin and shame and sorrow  
We never meet again!

*Here.* Hard words, good madam,  
Will break no bones, and yet ere all be ended  
Thou'lt find thy heart's best blood not rich enough  
To buy them back again! I have been taught  
From my youth up to scan the face of heaven  
And sight the coming storm! From out the east  
Even now the storm-cloud gathers; I can hear  
The sullen thunders mutter, aye and prophetic,  
See the forked lightning shooting angry fingers

Hither at England! England is no more  
For Englishmen: these greedy French and Normans,  
That ride resistless on the whirlwind hither,  
Will flog the land like hail, and scatter you,  
So that you know not where to hide your heads  
For shelter from the tempest! Prayer nor fasting  
Shall serve you then! Then you'll perchance remember  
Him you drove hence to-day, and, humble hearted,  
Will cry to all the winds of Heaven "Hereward!"  
Farewell my merry fellows, get to your homes,  
Be watchful, patient: there are those among you  
That yet shall live to strike a blow for England!  
Many a summer sun and winter snow  
Shall number year on year ere Hereward  
Be seen again among you; but the day  
Shall surely dawn, when, rising like a wraith  
From out the long grey mist of northern sea  
Tidings shall come of him! Upon a sudden  
A word shall pass like fire the fenside thro',  
And kindle all the Lowlands to a blaze;  
Above the wild sea wash upon your shores,  
Above the whirring of the seafowls' wings  
O'er marsh and mere, above the wind that whistles  
Your oak tops thro' and thro', a voice familiar  
Shall ring out clear and strong o'er Brundeswald!  
And every tongue from echoing hill and hollow  
Shall shout aloud thro' all the Danelagh,

"HEREWARD, welcome! Welcome, Hereward!

"'Tis Hereward come to his own again!"

(HEREWARD *turns and passes through the open door, disappearing across the marshland. He is followed by MARTIN LIGHTFOOT. The Priest raises his crucifix to LADY GODIVA, who sinks into her chair weeping, and buries her face in her hands*)

## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The coast of Flanders, on which is pitched the camp of the MARQUIS BALDWIN. Sand hills R. Military tents L. Sea back. Group of Vikings, HERWARD's followers discovered back, looking across the sea, and singing. FLORIAN, BERTRAND, and DE CRESPIGNY, Flemish Knights in the service of the Count of Flanders, down stage.*

*(Vikings' Chorus)*

Swiftly the swallow  
Sweeps o'er the swan's bath,  
Swiftly, more swiftly,  
Warrior on warrior,  
Waking with wolf-song,  
Wild widows weeping,  
Flashes his falchion  
Fierce for the red ruth!

*De Cres.* Hark to these wild sea wolves, their hideous  
howl  
Will conjure up a hundred ugly devils

From out the troubled waters !

*Ber.* Mark you not  
How their long hungry muzzles seaward turn  
And seem to sniff from off the coast of England  
The scent of blood and battle ?

*Flor.* It is rumoured  
The Count of Normandy hath pitched his standard  
On English soil, and that that sprig of Godwin,  
The perjured Harold, hourly meditates  
To fall upon him !

*Ber.* Nay, he is assailed  
By Hardraade in the North !

*De Cres.* Hardraade will give him  
His stomach full of fighting !

*Flor.* Maybe William,  
Forever politic, will stay his forces  
Until these two barbarians have flown  
Each at the other's throat, and be so mangled  
They make an easy prey !

*De Cres.* What hope hath Harold  
Against the flower of Norman chivalry ?

*Flor.* And yet my lord of Flanders hath made hire  
Of such another one in Hereward  
To fight his battles !

*De Cres.* Hereward ! Defend us !—  
A boasting, brutish, half barbarian,  
A thief ! An outlaw !



*Ber.* Softly, Sire Crespigny,  
The Wake hits hard !

*Flor.* Aye, and hath eyes and ears  
Are sleepless sentinels !

*De Cres.* Rest easy, prithee,  
There's not an idle tongue in camp to-day,  
But that doth itch to tell you, gentlemen,  
How he hath ridden forth against the Frisians,  
Bareheaded, with but silken shirt and hose  
For covering !

*Ber.* Since when ?

*De Cres.* Since yester morning !

*Flor.* Had he some wager on it ?

*De Cres.* Nay, men say

That being in his cups a storm arose  
Betwixt him and his lady love, Torfrida,  
And that in terms most vile and insolent  
He flung the magic helm and coat of mail  
He devilishly had bewitched her of  
Back at her feet, vowing he'd be beholden  
Unto no woman on God's earth for arms,  
But rather would ride shiftless into battle  
In the rude fashion of his ancestors,  
The Bersekers.

*Flor.* My lord !—

(*Enter the COUNT OF FLANDERS, the COUNTESS  
ADELA, Ladies in waiting, Men-at-arms, &c.*)

*Bald.* Now, by St. Peter,  
This tale of thine, attested to be true,  
Doth rival in its rich imagining  
A very Eastern fable !

*Adela.* Have it so,  
Mine honour shall be judged upon it.

*Bald.* Wherefore  
It shall be sifted. Let no soul stir hence  
Till we command ! Hearken, each one of you,  
Hath my lord Hereward been seen in camp  
Since yester morning ?

*Adela.* Nay, my lord !

*Bald.* Then, madam,  
Command from out your train of ladies here  
She that you name Torfrida !

*Adela.* Child, dost hear ?  
My lord would speak with you.

*(TORFRIDA, very pale, in white from head to foot,  
and with long dark hair falling loosely over her  
shoulders, steps from among the ladies in waiting.  
She folds her hands and half bows)*

*Tor.* Madam, your servant !

*Bald.* Is this the firebrand, this the slip of flame  
Hath wrought such havoc mongst us ? Sooner, Madam,  
Should I have set her down some old-world saint  
Stepped from the niche of a cathedral aisle  
Into the light of day.

*Adela.* Beware, my lord,  
These seemingly still waters travel deep,  
Thou hast not sounded her !

*Bald.* That will we shortly.  
How now, my lily wench, thou'rt not afraid ?  
Look up, fear nothing, thou shalt have fair judgment !

*Tor.* I nothing fear, Sire !

*Bald.* Ha ! Doth not thy conscience  
In aught accuse thee ? Is it not thou hast set  
My best Knights by the ears, so that I know not  
How many whole in body and in mind  
Be left me to command ?

*Tor.* Your wit, my lord,  
Is practised upon all too poor a subject  
To come by its deserts !

*Bald.* Minx, wilt deny  
That at this very hour Sir Ascelin  
Lies wounded grievously for that he carried  
Your favour in his helm ?

*Tor.* Had I a hand  
In wounding him ?

*Bald.* Nay, but thy Hereward had !

*Tor.* My Hereward !

*Adela.* Thy Hereward !

*Tor.* Nor Hereward,  
Nor one among yon Knights and popinjays  
Is aught to me !

*Adela.* Then did it ill become thee,  
Being a maid, equipped with modesty,  
Thy favour like a wanton to bestow  
Upon Lord Hereward !

*Tor.* I gave him nothing  
A maiden might not give ! Lord Hereward,  
Knowing it to be filched away from me,  
Wrested by force my favour from Sir Ascelin  
And so became possessed of it !

*Adela.* Men say  
He coveted the magic suit of mail  
Thou first bestowed on Ascelin !

*Tor.* They lie  
That tell thee so ! Ever since my great ancestor  
Wrested it from the body of a Sark,  
Amid the bloody rout of Montmajour,  
Never hath mortal man but Hereward  
Girt it upon him !

*Bald.* Heaven forefend us then,  
Upon what fit of passion hast thou stript  
Thy true Knight Hereward of coat of mail,  
And thrust him forth, defenceless and unarmed,  
Against the Frisians ?

*Tor.* My lord, I did not,  
He angered me ! He !—

*Bald.* Hold ! I'll hear no more !  
This hand of thine's a scourge more threatening

Than sword or pestilence : we'll clap thee, miss,  
Into a convent !

*Adela.*                      There's a remedy  
Fitter for fractious maids ! Marry her, Sire,  
Straight out of hand, to the first likely fellow  
That strikes our camp to-day !

*Bald.*                              By Our Lady, madam,  
Married she shall be !

*Tor.*                              Married !

*Bald.*                              Aye, by Lucifer !—  
Thou ravisher of Knights !—

*Tor.*                              There be some subjects  
Make sorry jests, and this is one, my lord !

*Bald.* By my soul, I do not jest, thou shalt be  
married

Ere the sun set !

*Tor.*                              Then shalt thou marry me  
In my grave sheet, Sire !

*Adela.*                              Prithee ! Heed her not !  
Tis but the first plunge of the wild young filly  
That hath not felt the bit before, my lord !

*Bald.* Patience awhile, sweet chuck, we'll manage her,  
We'll mend her paces !              (*Disturbance heard off*)

*Bald.*                              How now !

(*Enter a Man-at-arms*)

*M.*                                      Good, my lord,  
Here is a sturdy scurvy beggar knave

Whose coat scarce hangs upon his back, hath set him  
Down in our midst, nor will he budge an inch  
For man or devil, till we drag or carry him  
Into your grace's presence !

*Bald.* Ha ! a beggar !

And makes so bold a stir ?

*M.* 'Twould seem the fellow  
Hath got a kind of itching to exchange  
A buffet with the stoutest man-at-arms  
That dare stand up against him !

*Bald.* Then by Heaven  
Bid him within !

*M.* Within, my lord ?

*Bald.* Ay, marry !—  
We'll find him fighting, what fare follows after  
Ourselves shall have the choosing of !

*(The Man-at-arms pauses)*

Well, fellow,  
Art stricken with a palsy ? Do my bidding,  
Bring him within, I say !

*M.* My lord commands !  
*(Salutes and exits)*

*Tor.* My lord !

*Bald.* I'll have no speech with thee.

*(Renewed commotion without. Enter Man-at-arms,  
followed by HEReward, very ragged and tattered.  
His face is concealed by a slouch bat, and his walk*

*is assumed. He is followed by a crowd of camp followers, who jostle and push him)*

Usher.

Give place there !

Give place, my lord commands !

*(Hereward flings three of his assailants to the ground)*

Bald.

Nay, by our lady,

He hath the strength of ten ! We'll match thy valour

With beauty, my bold fellow !

*(He leads Hereward to Torfrida, who has turned her back on the scene)*

Here is a maid

Shall make a wife for thee.

Tor.

He'd best beware

I make him not a widow.

*(Hereward draws closer to her)*

Dost thou lay

A finger on me, by my stainless honour

I'll—

*(Torfrida has drawn a dagger from her girdle, and only recognises Hereward as she turns to stab him. She flings the dagger to the ground, and throws herself into his arms)*

Hereward !

Here. Yes, I am Hereward !

Wolf's Head and Wake men call me. Baresark, lady,

You bade me hence, and baresark, save your presence,

I stand again before you.

*Tor.* Love, my lord,  
Let me count over every inch of thee  
Betwixt my tears and kisses.

*(Baldwin and Adela make a sign to their following  
and pass into tent L., followed by Nobles and Ladies  
in waiting)*

*Here.* Didst thou think  
That when the morn had risen on the riot  
Of the red wine, the oath I swore to thee  
Would be forgot?

*Tor.* I dared not.

*Here.* Berseker  
I vowed to be, and tho' the vow had cost me  
The best blood in my body, Hereward  
Holds to his word!

*Tor.* Thou art not wounded?

*Here.* Wounded?

What an I were? Is there a rose my lady  
Displays upon her cheek would whiteness borrow  
From the pale lily?

*Tor.* Hereward!

*Here.* Sweet mistress,  
Stoop to thy servant! Stricken I stand before thee  
With all my sins confest!

*Tor.* Wilt be less sudden  
In thy wild fits of anger? Temperate  
In deed and word, knowing no other fear



Than God and thy good conscience ?

*Here.* God and conscience,

And all beside I'll make thee !

*Tor.* Ribald tongues,

Pointed with poison, hourly scoff at thee,

Thy boasting, bragging, and the little follies

That smirch the splendour of thy greatnesses !

*Here.* Would'st have me more than human ?

*Tor.* I would have thee

Above all mortal men among thy fellows,

A God upon this earth !

*Here.* O, Sun in Heaven,

How beautiful thou art !

*Tor.* Ah, Hereward !—

This gift of me, being so easy won,

Thou wilt despise it !

*Here.* Wouldst thou mock at me ?

By the White Christ my deeds shall make thee famous

To the earth's end ! Hereward sings thy praises,

Hereward, sea thief, land thief, Kempery man,

Branded and outlaw ! Hereward the slayer

Of bears and witchwolves, Hereward the champion

Of fair princesses. Skall to the Vikings ! Skall !

*Tor.* Hush, hush ! Thine eyes flash forth unholy fires,

Thy voice, an echo from the pit of evil,

Strikes horror to my soul.

*Here.* Alack, Torfrida,

Thou'lt nothing make of me, mere mass of matter,  
 Mere bone and sinew. The one spark divine,  
 The mind, is wanting.

*Tor.* He Torfrida loves  
 Wants not in anything !

*Here.* Thou would'st exalt me  
 Too high, Torfrida !

*Tor.* Thou shalt lean on me,  
 I will not let thee fall !

*Here.* What saint hath stooped  
 From out of Heaven to me ?

*Tor.* Hereward,  
 No saint am I !

*Here.* What art thou, then, more rare,  
 More precious ?

*Tor.* Know me only as a woman  
 Who, do thou grow not weary loving her,  
 Nor break thy faith with her, will follow thee  
 To the world's end !

*Here.* Take thou my inmost soul  
 Into thy holy keeping !

*Tor.* Yea, thy soul  
 Is in my care !

*(Count Baldwin of Flanders, the Countess Adela,  
 Nobles and Ladies re-appear from tent)*

*Adela.* Marry ! A pretty pair !  
 These looks speak volumes !—

*Bald.* They shall be writ down  
To the last page of all ! Torfrida !

*Tor.* Sire !

*Bald.* Come hither, minx ! How stands thy  
disposition ?

Wilt have the husband of our choice ?

*Tor.* My conscience

Persuades me, Sire, that my duty lies  
In serving you in all things.

*Bald.* For a rebel  
Rank as thou art, thy duty pleaseth me,  
Look that thou please thy lord as well !

*Adela.* My lord,  
Wilt not to table ?

*Bald.* Yea, sweet chuck, lead on,  
We follow thee !

*Adela.* Torfrida !

*Tor.* Madam !

*Adela.* Come !—

*(Torfrida turns to Hereward)*

*Tor.* Dear lord !

*Here.* Sweet mistress !

*(Adela exits into tent, followed by Torfrida and her  
Ladies in waiting)*

*Bald.* Haste thee, Hereward,  
As thou wert shod with wings !

*Here.* My lord, thy servant !—

*(Baldwin and the Nobles and Men-at-arms exeunt into tent. Hereward is left alone)*

Her mind and body do together dwell  
In a most happy harmony, and though  
The lily flower of her face did first  
Take root within me, day by day meanwhile  
Doth her soul's sweetness on me grow ! That minds  
Be fashioned more exceeding beautiful  
Than any bodies, in my dim perception  
Methinks I grasp at, and though partial nature  
Hath like a spendthrift prodigal bestowed  
More treasures on her form and every feature  
Than might suffice in the sum total of them  
For a great monarch's ransom, there is set  
Deep in her heart of hearts a jewel of price  
That doth outshine them all !

*(Enter MARTIN LIGHTFOOT)*

*Mar.* Even so, Master Hereward, which reminds me  
of an old fable !

*Here.* Ha, Martin ! Is it thou ? Art still my shadow ?

*Mar.* That am I, for good or evil ! And so to my  
tale, Master ! There was a man once who came by  
a casket, set with precious stones ; and he prized  
his casket so highly, he carried it with him whither-  
soever he went ! And with perpetual carrying and  
using of it, the stones one by one fell away, and  
the casket seemed as valueless !

*Here.* Well !—

*Mar.* Then did the foolish fellow, who was all eyes  
for the outside, fling it from him !

*Here.* Foolish ? Why ?—

*Mar.* Because the rarest jewel of all, my lord, lay  
hidden within ?

*Here.* What has that to do with the lady Torfrida ?

*Mar.* Nothing ! Nothing ! Save that beauty, which  
is but the external, must perforce decay and perish !

*Here.* Knave, dost think I love my lady but for  
what mine eye feasts on ?

*Mar.* Faith, I know not ! Art wiser than all the  
generations of men that have preceded thee ?

*Here.* Dost count me for a fool, fellow ?

*Mar.* I count thee for nothing, tho' I have oft taken  
thee in folly !

*Here.* Make good thy words or I'll cudgel thee !

*Mar.* Nay, must I be cudgeled if thou be proved a  
wise man ? Then must I prove thee a fool ! Who  
but a fool would have ridden forth as thou didst  
against the Frisians ?

*Here.* Daft thou art indeed, as all men declare thee,  
else why do I permit thee this license ?

*Mar.* Because I have followed thee faithfully through  
all thy fortunes, my lord, ever since thou wast  
whipped as a schoolboy and sent away from home  
with naught but a curse upon thee !

*Here.* That indeed hast thou !

*Mar.* And for thy freak of yester morning, bethink thee my life belongs to no man unless it be to the common hangman !

*Here.* And to whom does my life belong ?

*Mar.* To England, my lord !

*Here.* England ? Never a friend have I in England !

*Mar.* Nay, but thou hadst once, and thou shalt have again ! A man in misfortune need never grieve at the loss of his friends ! They are easily replaced when his fortunes mend !

*Here.* The rats ! The vermin !

*Mar.* Nay, they are not so bad neither. We are none of us so spotless as our friends picture us, nor so black as our enemies paint us ! Mankind is much the same the wide world over !

*Here.* Thou'lt never save mankind by preaching !

*Mar.* Nor England neither ! As any man might have prophesied to that bedridden saint Edward, with his monks and priests and such like abominations ! The wolf Harold will have to be a brave wolf to keep the platter he hath stolen ! Hath heard that Hardraade the lion hath landed in the north, to tear his portion from him ?

*Here.* Aye !

*Mar.* And that William the Fox is landing in the south to cozen his portion from him ?

*Here.* Aye! He will sell his country to the best bidder; no good ever came yet out of a Godwin!

*Mar.* Hold him not too lightly. Hardraade he will overcome.

*Here.* Harold overcome Hardraade? The wolf the lion? Thou art mad, man!

*Mar.* Hardraade he will overcome, thyself shall witness it. But William the Fox, there's a hard nut to crack. Then shall come thy turn!

*Here.* My turn? Never! Their quarrels are nothing to me.

*Mar.* Deceive thyself if thou wilt. I know thee better. The very twitching of thy hand upon thy sword hilt betrays thee!

*Here.* I warned them. They would not hearken to me!

*Mar.* Thou warned'st them thou wouldst return.

*Here.* I was but a boy!

*Mar.* And now thou art a man, so much the more reason. It needs a man to save England. And his name is—

*(Shouts are heard from the tent beyond: "Hereward! Hereward!")*

Hear'st thou the answer, master?

*Here.* They but summon me to eat and drink, never for thy purpose.

*Mar.* Thou shalt do better than eat and drink.

*Here.* I shall do as I will !

*Mar.* Thou wilt go, I know thee.

*Here.* Go I will not !

*(Enter a Man-at-arms)*

*M.* My lord, the patience of my noble master  
Passes all bounds.

*Here.* Go, tell thy master, Sirrah,  
I follow thee !

*(Man-at-arms salutes and exits. Hereward and  
Martin exeunt)*

SCENE II.—*A spacious tent, through the back of which  
is seen a view of the sea. BALDWIN, COUNT OF FLAN-  
DERS, is discovered at the head of a long banqueting table.  
To the right of him is seated the COUNTESS ADELA, and  
on his left TORFRIDA. There is a vacant chair beside  
Torfrida. DE CRESPIGNY, BERTRAND, and FLORIAN,  
together with other Flemish Knights, are seated at the table.  
As the scene is discovered, the musicians at the back of the  
tent discourse soft music.*

*Adela.* Dost like my music, good my lord ?

*Bald.* Methinks

It hath too languorous and soft a sound  
To stir an echo in the rugged breasts  
Of these my dogs of war. Thy tinkling lutes



Are but for ladies' bowers. Strike me the note  
From out the soul of music that shall stir  
A very coward's heart to deeds of arms,  
And urge the valiant, like a mighty torrent,  
To the high top of valour!

*Adela.* Nay, my lord,  
These few brief hours are dedicate to love  
And beauty's blandishments. These are the airs  
That, like the first warm breath of Spring, call colour  
Into the cheeks of maids, and dew their eyes  
With dreams of coming summer.

*Bald.* I am tuned  
Into a different measure. Let those tongues  
That would make music for me summon hither  
My Hereward.

*(An Usher calls without)*

*Usher.* Lord Hereward!

*Ber.* My lord,  
He hath set sail for Cornwall, to carve open  
Another score of giants. Though his modesty  
Boasts but of one giant victim to his valour,  
'Tis said by constant telling of the tale,  
This one hath grown to twenty!

*Flor.* It may be  
The bear he slew in Scotland, gentlemen,  
Hath lately littered and the whelps are grown  
Unmanageable.

*De Cres.* Hark back, all of you,  
He hath forgot some shred of his attire  
Among his scurvy friends the Frisians,  
Which being in a sense necessitous  
Unfits him for these ladies' company.

*Tor.* Were your swords sharpened to as fine a  
point  
As these your wits, my lord were better served  
With soldiers, gentlemen !

*Adela.* Peace, all of you,  
Is Hereward not proper man enough  
To captain his own battles ?

*(HERWARD suddenly appears through an opening at  
back of tent)*

*Here.* Wake ! A Wake !  
Come wolf, come raven, they shall fatten fast  
That follow Hereward !

*Bald.* Good Hereward,  
By our immortal soul, he loves us best  
Who drinks most deep to thee !

*(Baldwin raises a massive goblet. Hereward takes it  
from him)*

*Here.* Ho, Bersekers,  
Fill full the brimming beaker and drink back  
With skull, and skull again, and once more skull,  
To this the staunchest heart and stoutest soldier  
That steps in Flanders !

*(The Vikings all raise their glasses with a shout of "skall!")*

*Tor.* Hereward, thy homage  
Lies first unto my lady!

*Here.* Skall, fair lady,  
And perfect flower of beauty!  
*(Hereward drinks again)*

*Adela.* Here is a flower  
Fairer than I, Lord Hereward.

*(Points to Torfrida)*

*Tor.* Nay, nay!  
That cannot be. Didst ever see two suns  
Shine in one heaven?

*Here.* Faith, full oftentimes!—  
Thou wilt see four, drink thou but deep enough.  
*(Hereward returns the bowl to Baldwin)*

*Bald.* Why, thou hast drained the bowl, thou wilt  
see eight  
Upon the morrow!

*Here.* Have no fear, my lord,  
We vikings are so seasoned, we will drink  
Ten times as deep as any other man,  
Fight twice as lustily, and for the maids  
When we come wooing them—

*Tor.* Lord Hereward!  
*Flor.* Tell us, we pray thee, gentle Hereward,  
Didst not count twenty heads upon the giant

That fell a victim to thy virgin sword  
In Cornwall ?

*Here.* Twenty I did count, my lord,  
And every separate head, I pledge my honour,  
As ugly as thine own.

*Ber.* I better love  
The fairy Princess fable !

*De Cres.* Nay, the bear  
Hewn into halves by gallant Hereward  
With a mere prentice blade.

*Here.* Its hide did serve it  
Better than shall thy skin thee, though 'twere fashioned  
Tougher than ever skin of bear.

*Flor.* My lord !—

*Here.* An adder's poison lurks within their tongues,  
And I'll not bandy words with them ! My sword  
Shall answer for me !

*(Hereward half rises)*

*Tor.* Hereward ! dost love me ?  
Look to thy promise.

*(Hereward springs to his feet and draws his sword)*

*Here.* Nay, I'll cleave them through  
From crown to toe !

*(Everyone rises, the Flemish Nobles draw their swords  
amid a scene of confusion)*

*Bald.* By our lady, Hereward,  
Dost thou forget our presence ?

(MARTIN LIGHTFOOT suddenly appears, breathless,  
through an opening at back of the tent)

Mar. Lord ! my lord !

Here's news—from England !

Here. England !

(Hereward lowers his sword)

Bald. Gentlemen,

Put up your swords !

(The Flemish nobles reluctantly obey. At the same  
moment a Viking vessel, with a swan's head at the  
prow, and filled with Vikings, is seen through the  
back of the tent to shoot up on to the beach.  
SYGTRYG, the chief among them, springs ashore  
and enters the tent)

Syg. Art thou Earl Hereward ?

Here. Hereward am I. Who art thou ?

Syg. One Sygtryg,  
Northumbrian born ! I fought at Stamford Brigg,  
'Gainst Hardraade.

Bald. Harold Hardraade !

Syg. He is slain !  
With Tosti Godwinson ! And all the flower  
Of Norway's warriors !

(Hereward starts)

Here. Great Hardraade slain !  
Hardraade the King of vikings, darling hero  
Of all the men of Norseland ! By whose hand

Hath Hardraade fallen ?

*Syg.* By the hand of Harold,  
That once was King of England !

*Here.* Mercy, man,  
What hawks are these, that pluck the splendid eyes  
From out the heads of eagles !

*Bald.* "Was King," say you ?  
Why "was king," prithee ?

*Syg.* Being King no more !  
For having fallen like a sudden fire  
On Hardraade's force at Stamford, and consumed  
The head and body of them, he is flown  
Swift as a whirlwind into distant Wessex,  
Where Norman William, with a mighty company,  
Had pitched his camp at Pevensey !

*Here.* Say on,  
I follow thee !

*Syg.* King Harold was entrenched  
Upon a hill at Senlac ! Thither William  
Led in three equal and supporting lines  
His horse and foot ! From the first streak of morn  
Till night closed in, with ever varying fortunes  
Their forces did contend ! The Norman host,  
Like to a sea encroaching, sought to compass  
The summit of the hill ; the Saxon yeomen,  
Tho' spent with their forced marches, formed a wall  
Against the Norman flood, impenetrable !—

Then William, who beheld his warriors waver  
Like to a field of corn that bows its head  
Before the levelling tempest, raised his vizor,  
That all men's eyes might look on him, and shouted  
"Archers, shoot upward!" Swift and sure, an arrow  
Falling from out of Heaven, pierced the eye  
Of Saxon Harold! Leaning on his shield  
In mortal agony, he drew the shaft  
Forth from its socket, crying all the while  
"St. George, strike home for England." On a sudden  
The Normans feigned a flight, the Saxons followed  
Quick on their heels; they turned again; a charge  
From the French horse bore them above the barriers  
Built high about the Saxon soldiery,  
Into the very presence of the King,  
Who, neath the waving standard of the Dragon,  
Swung far and wide his mighty battle axe,  
And carved a magic circle of sure death  
About his presence! As the day drew in,  
And the first early stars looked out of Heaven  
Upon the havoc down below, behold  
The heap of slain grew breast high, and the press  
Of numbers like an avalanche! The figure  
Of the great Saxon King, almost alone  
Save for his gallant brother, loomed a moment  
Upon the dusky summit of the hill;—  
He fell, and twenty thousand Norman heels

Trod the last breath of life from out of him !

*Here.* Oh, noble soldier, gallant-hearted Harold !  
Never shall any son of English soil  
Hear this thy tale retold, but he shall feel  
The blood race through his veins the faster for it,  
And his heart leap up to thee ! Would to God  
I too had stood by thee and found a grave  
With thee in England !

*Syg.* England is no more  
For Englishmen !

*Here.* What sayest thou ?

*Syg.* This Norman  
Hath trodden her beneath his feet !

*Here.* Thou liest !  
Wessex is not all England ! Let the Norman  
Dare set his foot once above Watling Street,  
And a black tempest from the Danish Norseland  
Shall blast him !

*Bald.* There be none to lead in England.  
The head's hewn from the body !

*(Hereward falls into a reverie).*

*Tor.* Hereward,  
Hast thou no word ?

*Here.* A memory comes to me,  
Faint as an echo of the far blue waters  
That wash the ever white cliffs girt about  
The little space of England ! I see hills



Crowned with green woods, and valleys through whose  
hollows

The sauntering rivers shine and sing their way  
Into the neighbouring seas ! Lo here, the smoke  
From some farm homestead, like a flickering spirit  
Climbs lazy up the sky, and there, methinks,  
I see the sheep-clad downs, and watch the gorse  
Burst into golden blossom !— England ! England !  
Here is my wound ! Here am I vulnerable !—

*(Hereward suddenly seems to awake from a dream)*

Oh, dear, dear land of England ! English land,  
Whose forests, floods, and fens have gathered me  
So oft into your bosom, many an exile,  
When he shall hear this news of thee to-day,  
Shall feel a sudden catch come in his voice,  
And a great flood of tears o'ermastering  
Flung up into his eyes !—My lord, I pray thee  
Grant me a service !

*Bald.* Name it, Hereward !—

Tis thine e'er asked !

*Here.* My body is in Flanders,

My heart in England, Sire !

*(Torfrida springs forward to Hereward)*

*Tor.* Hereward !

*Here.* Wilt follow my poor fortunes ?

*Tor.* Thou and fortune

Are one, my lord,

*(Hereward encircles her with his arm)*

*Here.*

What say you, Bersekers!—

Daredevils, seadogs, Norsemen all of you,

Wilt follow me once more?

*Vikings.*

Skall, Hereward!

Skall to the Wake!—

*(Hereward draws his sword)*

*Here.*

To me, then, one and all,

Follow me home, I'm for England!

*Tor.*

England!

*Vikings.*

England!

*(Hereward raises his sword, his left hand still encircling Torfrida. The Vikings group round him and all raise their swords together at the last word "England." The Count of Flanders, Adela, and the Ladies L. Flemish Nobles R. Hereward and Torfrida centre)*

*(Curtain)*

## ACT II.

*Peterborough Minster.*

SCENE—*A room in the Minster. Window right, looking on to the cloisters. Fireplace left. Door back. Table centre of stage, at which the ABBOT THOROLD is discovered sitting. Parchments and books on table.*

*Thorold.* The tempest of this English discontent  
Grows to a head, and like some thunder-cloud  
Hung heavily above us, doth but wait  
The flash of the forked lightning to unloose  
The pent-up flood of waters ! We have set  
Our foot upon this southern shore of England  
And must uprise by inches ! Western Wales  
Still smoulders with half-smothered fires, the North,  
Like to a monstrous avalanche, still threatens  
To sweep us into the once favouring seas,  
And now from out the East a cloud is risen  
Ominous in the person of this Hereward—  
A people's hero. Though I do assume  
A mind incredulous, I am equipped  
With every fairy fable that doth buzz  
About his coming. The whole country side

Rings with his name : his gallant deeds in Flanders,  
 His prowess in the Scottish wars, his feats,  
 Half myth, half fable, on the coast of Cornwall  
 Ere yet he grew to manhood. Were these Danes  
 Led by the shallow Osbiorn, that have followed  
 Hereward's bold flight hither, but inspired  
 With aught but hopes of plunder, it would fare  
 Hard with His Majesty ! Menkind must measure  
 Not swords alone, but wits with my great master  
 If they would overcome him.

*(Disturbance and noise of shouting heard without in  
 cloisters, mingled with clashing of arms)*

*(Voices without)*

Hereward !

Help ! Hereward !

*(BROTHER HERLUIN hurriedly enters, pale and  
 trembling)*

*Tho.* What means this Babel, brother !

Who stirs without ?

*Herl.*

Lord Taillebois, holy father,

Who, followed by a rout of Norman soldiery,  
 Is hither fled for shelter. Hereward,  
 Heading a lusty troop of Danes and vikings,  
 Whose palms itch to possess the blessed treasure  
 Of this our minster, fell upon his forces  
 And scattered them.

*Tho.*

Made our men not some show

Against this rabble ? How is this man fashioned,

That his mere name doth conjure up such shadows  
As serve but to scare children ?

*Herl.* 'Tis a limb  
Of the foul fiend himself ! Hath he not sworn  
When but a boy to burn this roof above us  
And roast us bodily ?

*Tho.* Brother, I fear me  
Thy mind is in more peril than thy body,  
That art so poor in faith !

*Herl.* Peccavi, father,  
My sin is heavy !

*Tho.* In humility  
Lies all men's pardon. Each and all of us  
Are sinners, brother. Get thee hence and pray,  
I'll find thee penance later !

*(Herluin bows humbly and exits. A further disturbance is heard without, and Taillebois' voice above all)*

*Taill.* Let me pass !  
Let me pass to the Abbot !

*(TAILLEBOIS, his dress much in disorder, thrusts himself through the door and confronts the Abbot)*

*Tho.* Gallant Taillebois,  
So thou art masterful when Hereward  
Be not upon thy heels !

*Taill.* I'll not be baited  
By a French priest !

*Tho.* Bully ! Thou hast been whipt

By a barbarian !

*Taill.*                      Hell's plague upon him !  
It is a flood that sweeps the fenland over,  
And as we fly before it follows us  
With " Hereward is come again ! "    The rustics,  
Gaping from their mud hovels as our horse  
Ride by their piggeries, wax insolent  
And shout, " Beware of Hereward ! "    The lasses  
No longer scurry from us, but return  
Our stare with straight defiance, daring us  
Lay but a finger on them.    Hark thee, Thorold,  
The fenside is bewitched !    The cursed name  
Rings from the rushes where the wild fowl rise  
And scatter o'er the marshland, shapes itself  
Within the oak tree tops that whistle it  
Back to the barren sea-coast line, from whence  
This devil was blown hither !

*Tho.*    Hereward  
Hath plucked the heart out from thee.

*Taill.*    He's bewitched :  
My men will swear it !

*Tho.*                                      Lily-livered Taillebois,  
'Tis fear hath turned the colour of their minds,  
Even as willows bent above a stream  
Are blown grey by the wind !

*Taill.*                                      Fear hath not fashioned  
The fiend incarnate fighting at his side,

His wife men name her ! She's a fearsome witch,—  
I'll stake my life on it ! A face of snow,  
Eyes like two flames, and hair as black as night  
Blown in a cloud about her ! When she passes  
Along the Saxon lines she doth possess them  
With twenty thousand devils !

*Tho.* I remind me  
There was a time the heart of my lord Taillebois  
Changed not to water when or maid or woman  
Fell on his way, but fire !

*Taill.* Naught fear I  
Except the devil !—

*Tho.* E'er I finish with thee,  
I'll teach thee to fear God ! Go !

(BROTHER HERLUIN enters)

Well, good brother ?

*Herl.* Lady Alftruda, holy father !

*Taill.* (*Taillebois starts*) She !  
Alftruda here ?

*Tho.* Admit her !

(*Herluin bows and exits*)

*Taill.* What mischance  
At an hour so beset with peril, brings  
This lady hither ?

*Tho.* Ask his Majesty  
Whose ward and charge she is ! They tell me, Taillebois.  
Thou hast cast eyes upon this maiden, whether

For her full flower of beauty, or, as some say,  
 For her rich manors and inheritance  
 I know not !

*Taill.* Liars !

*Tho.* Note it carefully,  
 She is a prize of war, and will be destined  
 To whosoe'er shall make our master's quarrel  
 Most loyally his own !—

*Taill.* How doth this touch me ?

*Tho.* Just by as much as thou shalt make a head  
 Against this Hereward !

*Taill.* E'er I take horse  
 Anew against him, by St. Lucifer  
 I'll see this lady !

*Tho.* By all holy saints  
 That shape the destinies of reckless mortals  
 Thou'lt better be advised ! Bethink thee Taillebois,  
 This wench is proud ! She loves not beaten men  
 Nor will unbend to them !

*Taill.* Plague on thy bluntness,  
 I will not stomach it !

*Tho.* Thou wilt obey  
 If thou dost hope to prosper !

*(Thorold rises, and with an air of command motions to  
 Taillebois to retire. Taillebois hesitates a moment  
 and then exits)*

*Thorold.* Lightning looks



And brows of thunder are the only weapons  
With which to whip this sodden animal ;—  
Now must I loose my features in a smile  
And like some winter suddenly dissolved  
Into a genial spring, encompass me  
With a brief show of sunshine ! This fair minx  
Is no flesh for the lash ! She is no Taillebois,  
She hath mind, spirit, and the soul to dare  
Heaven's damnation ! She must wheedled be,  
Coaxed and caressed by every subtle flattery  
Soft tongue can twist and turn itself to !—Strange,  
How excellent a mask this flesh may be  
That can feign anger, hate, hope, terror, all  
The paltry passions poor humanity  
Is scourged and cajoled with !—A step, she comes !—  
Mask fail me not !

*(Alftruda suddenly appears in the doorway, her face  
flushed and angry, her gold hair falling on her  
shoulders)*

*Alf.* Wherefore I pray thee, father,  
Didst thou permit me learn from the pale lips  
Of these my bower maidens, that this rebel  
Stands thundering at our gates ?

*Tbo.* Hast heard him thunder ?  
Or yet an echo of him ? In a moment  
Thy fears shall prove as shadows !

*Alf.* Fears are shadows

To the soul of Alfruda !

*Tho.*

Have it so !

Taillebois is with us still, and at his heels

A goodly following !

*Alf.*

Heaven pity us

If nothing stands twixt us and Hereward

But such a reed as Taillebois !

*Tho.*

Where and how

Hast thou met Hereward ?

*Alf.*

When but a child,

And sojourning in Scotland with my kinsman,

Gilbert of Ghent, a monstrous polar bear

That was reputed half a witch, half human,

Half kinsman to my cousin, broke his way

Through the iron cage that held him prisoner,

Into the bower where my lady's maidens

Sat sewing ! I was separate from the rest

By the full garden's length ! When they beheld him

The women shrieked and fled, closing the door

Upon me ! Not a man within the keep

Dare set his foot outside. The brute's warm breath

Beat full upon my face. He towered above me

To strike his prey, when suddenly a boy—

A mere boy—stood betwixt me and the monster,

And with his sword clave the bear's head in two.

That boy was—Hereward !

*Tho.*

The maids declare

He wanteth not in beauty !

*Alf.* 'Twas a face  
Of a strange fascination, one eye grey  
The other blue, I mind me.

*Tho.* Pity 'twas  
Thou didst not keep a hold on him !

*Alf.* Maybe  
I had no mind to !

*Tho.* Once but led and governed  
By these thy brains and parts he were an implement  
Ripe to our hands !

*Alf.* Hath he not chained himself  
To this iceberg Torfrida ?

*Tho.* Not so fast  
But that the chain that binds the two together  
May not be struck in twain !

*Alf.* How so ?

*Tho.* The church  
Hath grave suspicion that the bond betwixt them  
On English soil may prove invalidate,  
And to that end his Majesty hath charged me  
Look closely into it !

*Alf.* It will not rifle  
My sleep o' nights.

*Tho.* Did but ambition prick thee,  
Thy speech were not so light !

*Alf.* Ambition, father,

Is no fit food for maids !

*Tho.* Thou dost belie  
Thy secret disposition. Let a woman  
But fashion this same headstrong Hereward  
Into a tool of William's and his Majesty  
Will stand deep in her debt. Dost follow me ?

*Alf.* To the first pages, father, of that book  
Wherein a little child is taught to read  
The legend of a serpent in a garden  
That did beguile a woman !

*Tho.* This thy tongue  
Doth grow too subtle !

*Alf.* Then grow plain with me !  
Thy heron Taillebois hath been struck to earth  
By my hawk Hereward ; thou needest hood  
And jesses to secure him ?

*Tho.* Let his eyes  
But light upon thy features, by my soul,  
They will not wander further !

*Alf.* Peace, good father,  
My face is not thy province. Mark me well :  
If for to-day I lend me to thy purpose,  
I lend me not to-morrow !

*Tho.* May my wit  
Make not our purpose one ?

*Alf.* My will shall serve  
So long as thy wit serve thee.

*Tho.* God thee speed,  
Thy disposition is most excellent !

*Alf.* Thy blessing, father !

*Tho.* Benedicite !  
The Lord go with thee !

*(Alfruda bows her head and slowly retires. Scene changes)*

SCENE II.—*Hereward's camp outside Peterborough. Open country—fenland. Broad dyke right back, over which rude bridge is thrown, tent left back, camp protected with felled timber. Some dozen Vikings seated about camp, repairing arms and armour. MARTIN LIGHTFOOT seated in front of tent, polishing up Hereward's breastplate and helm. He is humming to himself.*

*Martin.* Oh, this life is all awry,  
Yet I make the moments fly  
With a scraping and a scrubbing  
And a rubbing, rubbing, rubbing !

Since my luck was to begin it,  
Plague upon the canker in it,  
I will see the curtain tumble  
On the hurly, burly jumble.

Life's a beggar, dress him gaily,  
He will tread a measure daily,

Laugh his fill till all be ended;  
Little said is soonest mended.

Fal, la!, la!

*(All this time Martin continues to polish up the armour)*

With a rub here, and a scrub there! *(pause)* So, my fine fellow *(to the helmet)*, set you on the head of a coward, and he will appear for all the world a brave man! There be fair faces covering foul hearts, and fine words filthy dispositions! And so we jog our way through this labyrinth of dreams, to-day clutching at straws, to-morrow dancing after shadows! *(business all through)* What shadow, my lord Hereward, dost thou pursue? England! Will England keep thee alive, or help thee when dead and buried? God save thee! And thou, my lady Torfrida, what shadow dost thou pursue?—Hereward! Will Hereward love thee any longer than a man is able? God save thee! And still we live and still we love, this life being but a brief tarrying betwixt birth and death! And forasmuch as there is not wickedness enough in the world that is with us, we must needs breed and beget more sin and misery to the world that comes after us! God save us all, say I!

*(Winter's voice is heard off)*

*Win.* God save Hereward!

*Voices off.* God save Hereward!

*(The Vikings spring to their arms and gather in front)*

*of tent. Martin springs to the bridge and is confronted by WINTER, GERI, and several Saxons, all armed)*

**Mar.** Who comes hither ?

**Win.** Why, Martin ! Martin Lightfoot, hast forgotten thine English tongue, thou foreign salamander ?

**Geri.** And honest English faces, thou French frog ?

**Mar.** Master Winter ! Master Geri !

**Win.** He looks not like a soldier, neither !

**Geri.** Marry, and yet he looks as though upon provocation he might kill a man !

**Win.** Where is thy master, Martin ?

**Mar.** In the seventh heaven of delight !

**Geri.** Where may that be, thou rogue ?

**Mar.** According to thy disposition. Be thou a lover, in thy lady's chamber ; a soldier, in the hurly burly of battle where blows rain thicker than hailstones ; a cunning rogue of a priest, by the bedside of a dying man, who prepareth his last will and testament ! My master is hunting Norman foxes to their holes !

**Geri.** And thou standest sentinel in his absence !  
What have we here ?

*(Geri advances to the tent)*

**Mar.** That which my lord holdeth more precious than the eyes of his soul !

*Win.* A treasure ! A find !

*Geri.* To it, boys !

*(A rush is made to the tent. Martin springs in front of the tent and draws a little axe from his breast, which he brandishes threateningly.)*

*Mar.* Stand back, one and all of you !

*Win.* How now, you threaten ?

*Mar.* This little axe is sharp, and will pick a hole in your brains before you can count three !

*(HEREWARD suddenly appears on bridge, followed by a troop of Vikings)*

*Here.* Winter ! My little Winter !

*Win.* Hereward !

*Geri.* What, Hereward !

*Here.* Why, Geri !

*Win.* Heaven save thee !

Thou'rt grown, thou art a man !

*Geri.* I' faith, thine arms !

This coat of mail, this helm, a cunning hand

Hath fashioned them !

*Here.* I swore it, little Winter !  
I swore that I would come again !

*Win.* Thine oath  
Hath slept and woken with us !

*(Martin exits over bridge)*

*Here.* And with me !  
My blood leaps up like wine to tread again



This sea-blown turf of England !

*Geri.* Hereward,

There is no land like England ?

*Here.* England, Geri ?

There is no other free land !

*Win.* Is not, say you ?

Was not were better said !

*Here.* Not so long, Winter,

As I live ! Speak to me of home,—my mother

Is driven out of Bourne ?

*Win.* This many a day,

And cloistered within Crowland.

*Here.* Noble lady,

Thy scurvy monks have had their will with thee,

I would have served thee better !

*Geri.* Peterborough

Is Norman too ! That old fox Herluin

Is high in favour !

*Win.* Wherefore Hereward

Hast thou delayed so long ?

*Here.* I have sought aid

Of every state in Europe, using prayers,

Entreaties, tears, that they would hire me forces

To help me hither ! All refused ! This Norman

Is feared.

*Geri.* We know it !

*Here.* Suddenly King Sweyn

Swore to sail out of Denmark ! Had he held  
His word with me, and here in his own person  
Pledged with his honour our full liberties,  
He might have dared all !

*Win.*

Did he fail thee ?

*Here.*

Worse !—

Betrayed me ! Sent his brother Osbiorn hither,  
Who, hanging on our poor coasts, pillages  
Our terror-stricken villages and draws  
His sword on naught save those unarmed ! His tooth  
Is poison deeper than the Norman fang,  
And hath bred such disease in these our bodies  
They may not heal till he be hence !

*Geri.*

What want we

With aught but thee ?

*Win.*

We will proclaim thee King,

None other !

*All.*

Hereward !

*Here.*

Peace, all of you !—

There be no kings here, till these Norman caitiffs  
Are driven to the seas !

*Win.*

Bethink thee !

*Here.*

Nay !

No man shall lay the charge to Hereward  
That he advanced his own poor person's gain  
Before his country's peril !

*Win.*

Art thou he

That dwelt and drank and brawled here in our midst  
As he would shame the devil ?

*Here.* Little Winter,

That Hereward is long since dead !

*Win.* Whence comes

This change in thee ?

*(Hereward approaches the tent, and drawing aside the  
covering leads Torfrida down to Winter)*

*Here.* Here !

*Win.* Holy saints !

*Here.* Yea, Winter,

The snow flecked feather from an angel's wing

Shows black beside her sweet soul's purity !

*Tor.* My lord, these gentlemen?—

*Here.* Are known to thee

This many a day ! Why here is little Winter,

Winter all flame and fire ! Here is Geri,

A most engaging fighting gentleman,

The dearest rogues, and sweetest echoes both of them

Of my wild youth !—Alack, poor gentlemen,

Beggared in words ?

*Tor.* Chide not these gentlemen,

I love them better so !

*Here.* This fair French lily,

When she a little while is grown with us,

Shall bloom an English rose !

*Tor.* Wilt give me room

Within your hearts ? How else may I take root  
On English soil ?

*Win.* Lady, there is room  
In English hearts for aught of Hereward's,  
Mine all is thine !

*Geri.* And mine !  
*Tor.* How poor am I  
That would repay you !

*All.* Skall, Torfrida ! Skall !  
Skall ! Hereward !

*(Surturbrand, an old Viking, blind and with white  
hair falling over his shoulders, pushes his way  
through the crowd)*

*Sur.* Skall Hereward !

*Here.* That voice !

*Geri.* Yea, 'tis old Surturbrand ! He hath been blind  
These two years !

*Here.* Hush !

*Sur.* Where art thou, Hereward ?  
Where art thou ?

*Here.* Here, old friend !

*(Surturbrand clasps Hereward to him)*

*Sur.* Ahoi, Ahoi !  
The ravens flap their wings, they scent the blood  
Of battles !

*Tor.* 'Tis my old world Hereward  
Speaking again !

*(Torfrida has drawn near Hereward, Surturbrand touches her)*

**Sur.** Listen ! I hear a voice  
Is strange ! and this my hand is fallen on  
Something as soft as down ! Come hither, Winter !—  
Come hither ! 'Tis a woman ?

**Win.** Yea !

**Sur.** A princess ?

**Win.** If to be beautiful be such !

**Sur.** She grows  
Great in my vision ! 'Tis some fairy princess  
From o'er the swan's bath Hereward hath taken  
As hostage for his fortunes !

**Here.** For all time,  
As God preserve him !

**Sur.** Skall to Hereward !  
Skall to the Vikings !

**Here.** Bear him hence !

*(Winter and Geri gently pass Surturbrand through the crowd)*

**Sur.** Ahoi !  
My Hereward is home again !

**Tor.** A friend  
Whose faith is written not in water !

**Here.** Yea,  
E'en such a friend !

*(Martin Lightfoot suddenly appears on the bridge)*

*Mar.* To arms, my lord ! To arms !  
The enemy !

*(Vikings hastily take up their arms)*

*Here.* Whence come they ?

*Mar.* Ivo Taillebois,  
With a great company of horse and foot,  
Gathered together out of Peterborough,  
Is on the main road hither !

*Here.* Doth he hope  
To catch the Wake asleep ?

*Vikings.* A Wake ! A Wake !

*Win.* A murrain on him !

*Here.* Listen, little Winter,  
Take thou thy Saxons by the lower dyke  
That strikes our road at Spalding, I will forth  
On the main causeway, holding him engaged  
Full in his front !

*Win.* I follow thee ! and then !

*Here.* Await my signal ! At the given word  
Fall on his flank !

*Win.* Agreed ! the signal ?

*Here.* This !—  
Torfrida ! England ! Victory !

*All.* Aye, Victory !

*(Hereward, heading his Vikings, prepares to cross  
bridge. Winter, Geri and the Saxons pass up  
L. U. E. Torfrida stands beside Hereward)*

SCENE III.—*The Cloisters at Peterborough. Doors leading into Chapel closed at back. Pillars to right and left. Alftruda discovered seated at pillar right.*

*Alftruda.* Rumour paints Hereward the rarest picture  
A woman's eyes may light upon ! He standeth  
In the deep shadows of my memory  
But in the likeness of a boy, and boys  
Own not that master spirit of the mind  
That dominates a woman ! She who is heart-whole  
Is as thrice armed against her adversary,  
And deep within me grows that lustful longing  
The skilful swordsman yields to who would measure  
Blades with an adversary of repute  
World famous as his own ! Beware, Torfrida,  
Men say thy beauty challengeth all time,  
Mine shall lay challenge to eternity,  
And out of it I'll fashion me a weapon  
Shall be thrust through a human soul ! I envy  
To match my strength against thine !

*(Abbot Thorold enters L, and comes down stage to Alftruda)*

*Tho.* Do I trespass  
Upon thy pious meditations, daughter ?  
*Alf.* Wilt swear them pious ?  
*Tho.* Dwell they not too long  
On Hereward !

*Alf.* What of it, an' they do?  
Make me acquainted better with Torfrida!

*Tho.* She is accounted beautiful!

*Alf.* What more?

*Tho.* Wise with a man's wit, and the subtler portion  
Of her good lord!

*Alf.* Didst ever know a man  
That loved a woman for her subtler wit  
Rather than for her lack of it?

*Tho.* Thy wit  
Should keep thee single all thy days!

*Alf.* Maybe  
I'll beg the outward semblance of a fool,  
And so be mated!

*Tho.* Hereward is mated  
Unto no fool!

*Alf.* She loves him?

*Tho.* As a sinner  
One hath snatched from the burning!

*Alf.* And he her?

*Tho.* Part love! Part reverence!

*Alf.* Part ice, part snow,  
As earth when it is frost-bound! Let him lie  
But once upon the lap of spring, or feel  
The kiss of the fierce summer grown to flame,  
Consume him soul and body!

*Tho.* It is certain



That love is not Torfrida's love !

*Alf.* And yet

No man may live and taste not sometime of it ?

*Tho.* So I have heard men say !

*Alf.* Dost never fear

For thyself, father ?

*Tho.* Nay, I am so fashioned

That like the elm I bend my head and bow

Before the storms of passion !

*Alf.* Men like thee

Do most of all escape us !

*Tho.* Hereward

Is like the oak ! He will be broke in twain

Do passion smite him sore !

Hark !

*(The voices of the terrified Monks are heard echoing through the cloisters. They enter L. in a body, and, surrounding Thorold and Alfruda, throw themselves on their knees)*

*First Monk.* Hereward !

*All.* Hereward ! Hereward !

*Tho.* Oh, most miserable,

How will you face the judge of Earth and Heaven,

That quail before a man ?

*(Thorold motions to Herluin, who flings open the chapel doors at back of stage, through which the organ peals out the opening bars of a Latin hymn taken up by the choir within the chapel)*

Pass in, my brethren,  
The hour of prayer awaits you !

*The Choir*

Spes sit omnis et tutela  
Domini in brachio,  
Fides ipsa sit fidei  
Gladio et presidio !

*Tho.* The Lord of Hosts keeps watch above his  
servants,  
His arm is as a sword against the oppressor !

*The Choir*

Pellitur ceu fumus Euro,  
Hostis improbissimus,  
Ceu cinis fremente duro  
Turbine actus caelitus,  
Salus una sempiterna  
Domini in brachio !

*Tho.* The might of man is but as dust, the Lord  
Endureth in his majesty for ever !

*(As Thorold concludes, the Choir and the Monks take up a great Amen. The music gradually dies away as the Monks recover from their terror and rise to their feet. Thorold waves Alfruda into the chapel. She passes up stage through a line of the Monks. The Monks then pass into the chapel, Thorold being the last to enter, and slowly closing the door behind him)*

SCENE IV.—*The same.*

(HEREWARD enters, with drawn sword, L., through the cloisters, followed by TORFRIDA. MARTIN LIGHTFOOT and Danes and Vikings press on after them)

*Here.* Taillebois !

*All.* Death ! Death to Taillebois !

*Tor.* Hush your voices,

This place is holy ground !

*Here.* Torfrida !

*Tor.* Hereward,

Thou wilt not lend thee to an impious deed ?

Thou wilt not stain thy hand with sacrilege ?

This house is God's house !

(Torfrida lays her hand on Hereward's arm. He becomes suddenly softened)

*Here.* What wouldst have of me ?

Mine enemy lies hid within !

*Tor.* Thy Vikings,

Drunk with the lust of blood—

*Here.* Fear nothing !

(Hereward motions his followers back)

Taillebois !

Come forth, I say !

(Hereward approaches the doors of the Chapel, and knocks on them with the hilt of his sword)

*Vikings.* Death! Death to Taillebois!

*Here.* Taillebois!

*(Hereward again knocks, and at the same moment the Chapel doors are flung open and the Abbot Thorold appears, boldly confronting Hereward. The Monks stand trembling behind him)*

*Tho.* By what prerogative dost thou profane  
The peace of God's house?

*Here.* Yield me up the body  
Of Ivo Taillebois!

*Tho.* Taillebois is not here,  
And were he here an hundred times, am I  
Thy servant?

*Here.* Saucy monk, whose servant art thou?

*Tho.* God's servant!

*Here.* Thou dost lie, thou art the servant  
Of William the usurper!

*Tho.* Who art thou,  
Insolent with thine air of sovereignty?—  
A King, thyself?

*Here.* A greater it may be—  
One who makes kings, or be their title false,  
One who unmakes them!

*Tho.* He who rules in England  
Ruleth by right divine!

*Here.* Divine!

*Tho.* The Church

Hath lent her blessing to his enterprise.  
If thou dost hope to prosper in thy venture  
Know that the power of Heaven forbiddeth thee !

*Here.* I am not come to match my wits with thine.  
I am a man of deeds, not words : thy province  
Is ended here !

*Hereward motions to two of the Vikings, who stand one  
on either side of the Abbot. He passes up stage R.  
Hereward turns to the Monks)*

Is there a Saxon monk  
Amongst you ?

*(Brand, Hereward's Uncle, a very old Monk with  
snow-white hair and beard, passes through the  
Monks and stands before Hereward)*

*Brand.* Hereward !

*Here.* Mine uncle ! Brand !

My more than father !

*(Hereward clasps Brand in his arms)*

*Brand.* Oh, thou rogue ! *(Embraces him)*

*Here.* Thy pardon

For all that lies behind me !

*Brand.* Art thou still

The Hereward we knew thee ?

*Here.* Uncle ! Uncle !

Suffering, purifying like to fire,

Hath learnt me many a lesson !

*Brand.* Thou art not come

Hither for sack or pillage?

*Here.* I,

A soldier?

*Brand.* Name thy cause!

*Here.* To save my country,

If the Lord find me worthy!

*Brand.* God is infinite

In his great mercy!

*Here.* Many times and oft

For deeds of lust and blood have I been proffered

The prize of knighthood!

*(Hereward draws his sword)*

Lay this sword upon me,

And, in the homely, simple Saxon fashion

We Vikings love and honour, consecrate

My service to my country's cause!

*Brand.* What miracle

Hath wrought this change in thee?

*Here.* Torfrida!

*(Hereward calls Torfrida to his side)*

*Brand.* Yea,

Thou art of that diviner, rarer air

That breathed into the souls of men doth purify

Even as doth God's spirit!

*(Brand gives his blessing to Torfrida)*

Kneel, my son!

Kneel, Hereward! God's Knight!

*(Hereward kneels, and Brand knights him)*

May God ne'er turn

His face from thee !

*Here.*

Amen !

*(Hereward rises. A sudden stir and scuffle is heard among the Monks in the Church, and Winter and Geri suddenly appear from among them, dragging Alftruda forward. Alftruda's face is hidden)*

*Geri.*

Behold ! a prize !

A prize here, Hereward !

*Here.*

What men are you,

That so maltreat a woman ? Winter, Geri,

Unloose your holds, I say !

*(Hereward crosses stage to them. They release Alftruda.)*

Your pardon, lady !

Look up, fear nothing ! We are warriors,

Not butchers !

*Alftruda suddenly removes her veil, and looks Hereward full in the face)*

*Alf.*

Dost not know me, Hereward ?

*Here.* Alftruda !

*(Hereward shrinks back against Torfrida, clasping her hand)*

*(Curtain)*

### ACT III.

#### *The Forest of Brundeswald.*

*(A glade in the forest. HERWARD discovered R., at a rough table formed from the trunk of a tree. With him are TORFRIDA, ALFTRUDA, and the ABBOT THOROLD. A brief repast is being served by Hereward's men. Hereward is leaning over the table with his head buried in his arms. At L. and further down stage, WINTER and GERI are discovered at a similar table. Entrance to a tent up stage R. Hereward's men are grouped up stage)*

*Tho.* One last, one parting goblet, Hereward,  
Charged to the brim with loving memories,  
Ere from our captors' gentle company  
We take our leave ! What say you, winsome lady ?

*Alf.* With all my soul : the hand of Hereward  
Hath wove our silken bonds so tenderly,  
The heart within me more than heavy grows  
At the approach of freedom !

*Tor.* Hereward,  
Hast thou no word of thanks ?



*(Hereward, for the first time, raises his head from his arms)*

*Here.*

How so ?

*Tor.*

Thine enemies

Speak well of thee !

*Here.*

Wilt let me be !

*(He resumes his former position)*

*Win.*

His mood

Is changeful !

*Geri.*

Nay, 'tis always this mood now !

How are we fallen from the golden heights

That crowned our hopes at Ely !

*Win.*

Cursed priests,

'Twas they unmade us ! Wheresoe'er thou find

A priest, know mischief lurks !

*Geri.*

Hush !

*Win.*

Fortune, Geri,

Will smile more kind on us and ours again

When we be quit of him !

*Geri.*

Yea, and the woman,

It was the devil's own mischance that made them

Two separate times our prisoners !

*Win.*

Mischance !

*Geri.* Dost think it was design ?

*Win.*

Look but a little—

The devil's self is in this sorceress,

Hereward is bewitched !

*Geri.* Art sure of it ?

*Win.* Twice have their eyes met, twice have I seen  
him shudder

As for some ill he dreaded !

*Geri.* Save their souls

Should harm come to our lady !

*Win.* Verily !

(*Hereward looks up*)

*Here.* Within an hour thou wilt be gone ?

*Alf.* Or sooner !

Wilt speed one little arrow of regret

After my flight, my lord ?

(*Hereward does not reply*)

*Tho.* These silences

Be eloquent !

*Alf.* A Norman knight had likened him

To the dull earth a sunbeam fugitive

Had suddenly deserted !

*Tor.* Hereward

Is Saxon, Madam !

*Alf.* Saxon is not senseless,

And Saxon Hereward hath never need

Of Norman eyes to look on me ! My lord,

How dost thou find me favoured ?

*Here.* Fair enough

To damn a saint !

*Alf.* Then art thou saved, in sooth,

That art but a mere sinner !

*Tho.* Hereward

Is just so much a saint, so much a sinner

As make a man !

*Alf.* We would not have him otherwise,

Else were all woman's beauty vain !

*Tor.* It is vain

That is begotten but of our poor bodies,

That are as dust and ashes !

*Alf.* Do we sin

In being born to beauty ?

*Tor.* Not if beauty

Corrupt not living souls !

*Tho.* Thou art at one

With the fair Grecian maid, who, having knowledge

That never might a man's eyes look on her

But that the sudden furies of desire

Were kindled in his heart, took such a horror

Of her sweet form and features, her own hand

Did with a knife deface the human picture

Nature had wrought so perfect !

*Tor.* Womanhood

Spoke eloquently in her !

*Alf.* Think'st thou so ?

Age cometh soon enough on all of us,

And with it hideous, sure disfigurement,

My fancy conjures up no fate so fearsome

As that of her's who, looking in her glass,  
Sees the first envious finger of decay  
Touching the front o'er which her lover hung  
So short a while ago in ecstasy !  
Dost thou not seize my meaning ?

*Tor.*

Passing well !

For such as thou art, beauty is a breath  
As perishable as the poor perfume  
Exhaled from out a flower ! To-morrow surely  
Thy boasted beauty shall be but a name  
Upon the lips of men !

*Alf.*

To-morrow, Madam ?

My years are less than thine, therein may lie  
Something to my advantage !

*Tor.*

Thou canst claim

Advantage over me in each vain thing,  
I value nothing !

*Alf.*

Art thou certain of it ?

Thou hast not put too trivial a value  
Upon my person ; ere this sun be set  
Thou wilt be richer in the ransom of me  
By thirty thousand marks !

*Tor.*

That is the price

My lord hath set on thee ! Thou art appraised  
In my mind passing dear !

*Tho.*

Pause ! Pause, dear lady !

Where is my price set down ? Am I to count

For nothing ?

*Tor.* Not in thine own estimation,  
I warrant me, good father !

*Here.* Cease thy wrangling,  
My head swims !

*Win.* Let us interpose !

*Geri.* I have it !  
Here is a ballade ! Something of French pattern,  
To please all ears : 'Twas writ by Abbot Thorold,  
So some say !

*Win.* Speed thee !

*Geri.* Gentle ladies, hearken  
The Ballade of the Peerless Knight !

*Tor.* Brave Geri !

*(Geri takes up a harp and sings as follows)*

#### BALLADE OF THE PEERLESS KNIGHT.

WHOE'ER would live a peerless knight  
With fame of crystal clear,  
Must own an arm the wrong to right,  
A soul unstained by fear ;  
And if from every weed of pride  
He keep his spirit free,  
All tongues shall hail him far and wide,  
The flower of chivalry !  
Come weal, come woe, all winds that blow,  
his watchwords they be three,

The first his God, and the second his King,  
and the third his fair Ladye.

His honour is the part of him  
That most his deeds doth crown,  
That never breath of man may dim,  
Nor might of man cast down ;  
Oh, deadlier far than foeman's arts,  
Or strength of helm or blade,  
He overcomes those carnal parts  
Of which all men be made !  
Come weal, come woe, all winds that blow,  
his watchwords they be three,  
The first his God, and the second his King,  
and the third his fair Ladye.

When life's brief day to dusk gives place,  
And night's deep shadows fall,  
When stalwart still, he turns to face  
The last dread foe of all,  
To every pure and peerless knight  
This bounty Heaven send,  
A soul unshaken thro' the fight,  
Untarnished to the end !  
Come weal, come woe, all winds that blow,  
his watchwords they be three,  
The first his God, and the second his King,  
and the third his fair Ladye.

*(As the chorus conclude the last refrain, Hereward, who has been growing more attentive all the time, suddenly rises violently from the table)*

Here. My God ! My God !

*(Torfrida kneels at his feet)*

Tor.

My lord, what aileth thee ?

Wouldst be alone with me ?

Here.

'Tis nothing !

Tor.

Geri,

Take hence these people !

Geri.

Madam !

*(All exeunt R. and L.)*

Here.

Go thou too !

'Twas but a sudden faintness, it will pass.

Leave me !

Tor. I beg of thee !

Here.

'Tis past, I say,

If thou dost love me, leave me !

Tor.

Hereward !

*(Torfrida exits slowly R. U. E. Hereward, when alone, repeats to himself the refrain of Geri's song, but when he comes to the last three words, "his fair Ladye," breaks down and buries his head in his arms. MARTIN comes on L. E. and looks at him, Hereward suddenly perceives Martin's presence)*

Here. How long hast thou been standing there ?

Mar. Some moments !

*Here.* Didst thou not hear I desired to be alone?

*Mar.* Nay, but I guessed it!

*Here.* Wherefore?

*Mar.* My lady looks not so fair as she was wont to look!

*Here.* What lady, fellow?

*Mar.* There is but one lady on God's earth, the lady Torfrida!

*Here.* I know that!

*Mar.* Once thou knewest it! Dost know it still?  
There were more honest men in the world were there more honest women! 'Tis not the men betray the women, 'tis the women betray each other!

*Here.* Thou shouldst have been a woman thyself!

*Mar.* Wherefore, my lord?

*Here.* Thou art so subtle!

*Mar.* Yea. My lady looks not so happy either!

*Here.* Who can be happy in this waste of a world?

*Mar.* They perchance, sometimes, whose conscience in naught accuses them!

*Here.* Doth my conscience accuse me?

*Mar.* A man is judge of his own conscience!

*Here.* What hast thou now in thy crazy head?

*Mar.* The story of my mother! She was fair when my father took her to wife, an Irish girl, skin white as milk, eyes bluer than the seas, hair black as the



wing of night ! But she was a worker ! She wore her beauty away slaving for my father ! She grew to a shadow, so pale ! Then the other came, a thing of pleasure, all red and gold !

*Here.* Thy tale lacks poetry, methinks !

*Mar.* It lacks no poetry, my lord : I killed him !

*Here.* Killed him ! Who ?

*Mar.* My father !

*Here.* Villain !

*Mar.* He killed my mother ! Thou hast killed many a man in battle ! Hast ever tried killing a woman ? 'Tis easier ! Hard words ! Hard looks ! Breaking of their hearts ! That is the sure way ; they die by inches, and suffer the tortures of the damned !

*Here.* Wouldst kill me, knave, if I treated a woman as thy father did ?

*Mar.* I would kill every man that betrayed a good woman !

*Here.* And is this the moral of thy tale ?

*Mar.* Nay, it hath no moral !

*Here.* Verily, I believe thou wilt end thy days in a mad house !

*Mar.* Or in a monastery, which is much the same thing !

*Here.* I am weary of thee ! Leave me !

*(Martin exits L. Torfrida enters R. U. E., and*

*Hereward does not see her till she comes behind him  
and puts her arms round his neck)*

*Tor.* So thou canst talk with this thy servant here  
And not with me ?

*Here.* My patience hath of late  
Passed out of hand ! Forgive me !

*Tor.* Hereward !  
What hast upon thy mind ?

*Here.* Naught !

*Tor.* Say not so,  
Dost think thou canst deceive the woman's eyes  
That love thee ?—Not a word ?—Am I grown less  
Within my lord's sight, even as she said,  
Since the poor faded roses in my cheeks  
Have hung their heads ?

*Here.* Torfrida !

*Tor.* Dost thou think,  
Had she lived my life, wept and suffered with thee,  
Endured with thee my all, she now could triumph  
Insolent in her beauty over me ?  
There are some women cheat Time of their looks,  
Women that never love, that never suffer,  
That never know the ravages of tears,  
And she is one of them !

*Here.* Speak not of her !  
What part doth she play in our lives ? The truth,  
If thou wouldst know it, is I am discouraged

Past praying for !

*Tor.* Love !

*Here.* All is lost, Torfrida,  
All I have lived for, worked for, striven for,  
With blood of battle, sweat of counsel, all  
Is gone from me !

*Tor.* Thou art deceived !

*Here.* Not I !

The enemy doth press too heavy on us,  
Our end is measured by so many inches,  
Our little all was staked upon this venture,  
And all is lost !

*Tor.* All lost ! Oh, Hereward,  
Our love still lives ! What doth this world contain  
Worthy the ransom of it ? 'Twas thy hand  
Didst first transplant me from my native soil  
And bore me hither ! This is not the Heaven  
I grew up under ; with my childhood's eyes  
I see the skies all blue, the earth all green,  
The orchards heavy with red fruit, the while  
The little meek-eyed oxen drag their burdens  
Along the sunlit lanes ! There was no sound  
In far Provence, save for the song of birds,  
Or ripple of the little running streams  
That fed the meadow marshes ! Here the skies  
Are always grey, the winds so cold, so cold,  
They pierce me through and through ! Ofttimes at night

Both wind and rain beat down on me and scatter  
The last pale bloom of beauty from the cheek  
My lord once thought so fair ! And yet, through all,  
I sleep by thy side, Hereward, I drink  
From out the cup thy lips have touched, thy platter  
Is also mine, I rise with each new morning  
And share each separate day's delight with thee,  
I live with thee, I love thee, and, God willing,  
When Death comes, it shall find me in thine arms !  
*Here.* Oh heart ! My heart !

*(Hereward embraces her)*

*Tor.* And I am happy, Hereward !  
Happy through all ! How oft we fight and struggle,  
Each of us, in this little world to win  
What we dream happiness ! Alack, our hand  
No sooner seizes on the rainbow bubble,  
Than it is burst and gone !

*Here.* 'Tis only love  
Never deceives ?

*Tor.* Love only !

*Here.* Of all women  
Thou art the most wise ! Counsel me, Torfrida,  
As in the old days thou wert wont to do,  
Whither shall we fly with our love ?

*Tor.* Oh, Hereward,  
Whitherso'er thou wilt, so that we leave  
This fateful land behind us ! Let us live

The old life once again, racing the winds  
 And breasting the broad billows ! Then shall hope  
 Take new root in your heart, the old time roses  
 Leap to my cheeks, and God's great gift of sunshine  
 Look once more from our eyes. Come, come, my love,  
 Ere yet it be too late !

*Here.*

I follow thee !

*(Alfruda's voice is heard off)*

*Alf.* Lord Hereward !

*Here.*

Who calls ?

*Tor.*

Why dost thou ask

Who calls ? Thou knowest !

*Here.*

'Tis Alfruda !

*Tor.*

Yea !

Alfruda !

*(ALFRUDA enters R. U. E., with hood and mantle  
 on, as for a journey)*

*Alf.* Laggard, my lord Hereward.

How long must we await thee ?

*Tor.*

Hereward,

Where art thou going ?

*Here.*

With my prisoners,

To yield them up to those who have appointed

A time and place outside our boundaries

To make their ransom good to me !

*Tor.*

How was it

Thou didst not signify to me thy purpose

Till this last hour ?

*Here.* Did I not ? Belike  
It did escape my memory !

*Alf.* My lady !  
We will but press thy lord into our service  
The briefest moment !

*Tor.* Is there not some other  
Can take thy place ? I want thee, stay with me,  
I have a something cold here !

*(Torfrida lays her hand on her heart. Hereward  
appears to hesitate. ABBOT THOROLD enters  
R. U. E.)*

*Alf.* Ah, good Abbot,  
Thy coming is well timed ! Here is my lady  
So amorously linked to her dear lord,  
She would forbid him ride the merest space  
In our poor company !

*Tho.* Then, gentle lady,  
Mefears, though on my soul unwillingly,  
Our stay must be extended ! Certain is it  
They who are pledged to find this ransom for us  
Will never dream deliver it to any  
But my lord Hereward's own hands !

*Here.* Thou hearest ?  
I will be with thee almost ere thy mind  
Hath conscience of my absence !

*(Alfruda advances to Torfrida)*

*Alf.* Let me take  
A heavy leave of thee, my lady !

*Tor.* Wherefore  
Dost thou hold out thy hand ? Were there a dagger  
Concealed within its palm it could not mean me  
Nor mine more deadly ill !

*Alf.* These be the manners  
Of the wild woods !

*Tho.* In sweetest charity  
Adieu, dear lady !

*Tor.* That it be adieu  
I pray from out my soul !

*Here.* Torfrida !

*Tor.* Go !

*Here.* If 'tis thy will—

*Tor.* I have no will but thine,  
Go !

*(Hereward half approaches Torfrida, and then turns  
and follows Alfrida and Thorold, who exeunt  
R. U. E.)*

*Tor.* Something clutches at me here, as though  
A hand of iron were fastened on my heart  
And wrang it ! Can this be what women feel  
Who know the pangs of jealousy ? I jealous !  
Of whom ? That womankind must love my lord  
Appeareth not so strange in my fond eyes  
As that a woman lives upon this earth

That could resist to love him ! That doth not lessen  
 His love for me. Yet in my soul it grows  
 A sacrilege that she, that other woman,  
 Should look on him ! I mind me of a maid  
 Who, fearing with the envious march of time  
 Her lover's eyes would dwell less amorously  
 Upon her, in the depths of a wild wood  
 Sought of a foul witch that fell on her way  
 A potion that should keep her beautiful  
 For ever in his sight ! The little cup  
 The hideous and assenting hag held to her  
 Was poison ! And when her poor lover passed  
 Singing along the wooden glade, his heart  
 All flame and fire to meet her, suddenly—  
 Stretched at his feet, he found her—dead.

How gruesome

My fancies grow ! Would my lord but return !  
 My heart beats lighter by his side !

(MARTIN appears mysteriously R. U. E., a paper in  
 his hand, and comes down stage behind Torfrida)

Mar. My lady !

Tor. Martin ! (she starts)

Mar. Hush !

(He points to the paper in his hand)

Tor. What hast there ?

Mar. A little something

Slipped from the pocket of my lord !



*Tor.* 'Tis his,  
Not mine, return it !  
*Mar.* Nay, 'tis thine, he dropped it  
As he rode hence with that foul Jezebel  
And the false priest !  
*Tor.* Return it !  
*Mar.* Read it !  
*Tor.* Never !  
*Mar.* It speaks of her !  
*Tor.* What of it ? Shall I pry  
Into the secrets of my lord ?  
*Mar.* Bethink thee,  
If it should touch his honour !  
*Tor.* Silence thee,  
Thy very breath is infamous !  
*Mar.* I swear it !  
On the eternal mother's memory  
I swear it !  
*Tor.* Oh !  
*Mar.* If thou dost love him, save him !  
Read it, I charge thee, read it !  
*Tor.* Give it me !  
(*Half in a dream Torfrida takes the paper and  
begins to read*)  
What wilderness of words is this ! " I, William,  
King by divine right of the state of Britain,  
Count of Anjou, and Duke of Normandy,

Do hereby make a solemn covenant  
With Hereward, men call the Wake, to grant him  
With a full earldom, all the lands and revenues  
Of Bourne and Spalding ! The said Hereward  
To hold them for his life as faithful subject  
And vassal to his sovereign lord the King !  
I further charge me, whensoever the Church  
Shall grant him dispensation to divorce  
And put away his wife Torfrida from him,  
To give to him in marriage, and as dower  
The manors and estates she shall inherit  
Within the borders of Northumberland,  
My ward Alfruda ! To the which bear witness  
William, his hand and seal, and this the hand  
Of Hereward " !— Hereward's hand is wanting !—

*Mar.* It will not want to-night !

*Tor.*

He hath not spoke

Of this to me !—

*Mar.*

Nor will not ! Give it back

Into my care ! It will be missed by now !

And being missed, he will return for it,

Within a moment !

*Tor.*

No ! No ! No ! No ! No !

Oh God !

*(Torfrida falls senseless)*

SCENE II.—*Another part of the forest. A river at back, across which are seen the spires of Crowland. Enter TAILLEBOIS and ASCELIN R. E., followed by Norman Men-at-arms.*

*Asc.* Thou wilt not catch the Wake asleep ! I warned thee

Thine errand was a vain one !

*Taill.* Push but on,  
We still may overtake him !

*Asc.* Art assured  
Thou hast the right road ? Should night fall upon us  
In this accursed labyrinth, the clouds  
Will be our roof till morning !

*Taill.* Wert thou earnest  
As I am in my hate of him !

*Asc.* Thou knowest  
There is a hunger here within my heart  
That nothing but his death may satisfy,  
But that he die to-day or die to-morrow  
Is one to me !

*Taill.* Thou art deceived !

*Asc.* Why, prithee ?

*Taill.* If he find death to-day our hands are dyed  
But in an outlaw's blood ! To-morrow morning  
He will be set too high for us to fly at.  
He holdeth the King's pardon !

*Asc.* Pardon !

*Taill.* Yea,

His Majesty hath purchased his submission  
By promise of an earldom !

*Asc.* Earl or none,

He shall not 'scape my vengeance !

*Taill.* Ever dreaming

Of thy divine Torfrida ?

*Asc.* Yea !

*Taill.* The Church

Is charged to give him speedy dispensation

To put her from him so that he may wed

With the King's ward, Alfruda !

*Asc.* Villain !

*Taill.* Thus

Hath the false priest betrayed me, but by Heaven

I will be equal with him !

*Asc.* This our purpose

Grows doubly one !

*Taill.* Death !

*Asc.* Death to Hereward !

Push on, I follow thee !

*Taill.* Advance, and silence !

*Taillebois and Ascelin exeunt L. E., followed by the  
Men-at-arms. As they disappear Martin enters  
R. U. E. carrying Torfrida in his arms. He places  
her gently at the side of the river and leans over her)*

*Mar.* Rest thee here awhile, poor burden, thy journey is well-nigh ended ! How lily-white thou seemest ! Is it death or sleep is fallen on thee ? 'Tis thus thou didst look when thou wast stricken first to earth ! And when thine eyes were open again thou didst naught but cry—Lost ! Lost ! Lost ! Lost ! Lost ! like one bereft of reason ! Thou wouldst have beaten thy brains out on the hard earth had my hands not held thee ! And then thou didst escape from me, and flew through the forest like some hunted thing ! And when I had followed and overtaken thee, thou didst fall at my feet in a white heap ! And I gathered thee up and bore thee hither ! Oh, man's work, man's work, man's work ! Patience, broken spirit ! I know where Peace dwells ! Thou shalt enter Crowland ! Thou shalt become a nun, and lay thy head on the bosom of God ! And I too, I will turn my back once more on this vain world ! What devil led me into it ?

*(Torfrida stirs, then half sits up as though dazed)*

*Tor.* Where am I ?—Hereward !—Oh, night eternal, I know it all !

*Mar.* Lean on me !

*Tor.* Who art thou ?

Martin ! Get from me ! Oh, the horror of it !

Thou'rt something of thy master's !

*Tor.* Take me thither,

Bury me there !

*Mar.*           Thou'll wait a little while,  
A moment only, see, here is a boat  
Will row me over !

*(Mar. drags up a boat at the side of the river)*

*Tor.*           Yea, be swift, be speedy,  
If he should find me !—

*Mar.*           Patience, wait for me !

*Tor.*   Yea !

*Mar.*           Swear it !

*Tor.*                           I swear !

*Mar.*   I will come again  
And bring thee—God's peace !

*Tor.*                           God's peace let it be !

*(Martin gets into the boat and disappears across the  
water. Torfrida sinks down beside the river)*

Never, ah never never more, so passes  
The light from out the world ! Why should love live,  
When death eats up each separate trivial thing  
That stirs upon the bosom of the earth ?—  
All perishes, naught hath the seed of life  
Within it, but with time must surely turn  
To dust and worms !—Thus is the law of nature,  
The law of God, and we endure through it !—  
Never, ah never, never more !

*Torfrida buries her head in her hands. Hereward  
suddenly appears L. U. E.*

*Here.* Torfrida !

*Tor.* Thou !

*Here.* Save me !

*Tor.* Save thee !

*Here.* From myself !

*Tor.* Oh mockery,

I could have saved thee against all the world,

I cannot save thee from thyself !

*Here.* Thou canst,

Be thou but—woman—and so merciful !

*Tor.* Merciful ! How wouldst thou have dealt with  
me

Had I come to thee pleading mercy !

*Here.* Man

Is fashioned different from woman !

*Tor.* God

Be praised that breathed life into us !

*Here.* My body

Is innocent of sin ! 'Twas but my heart

Offended !

*Tor.* 'Twas thy heart, thy soul, oh man,  
Were precious to me !

*Here.* Is it naught to thee

I am not further fallen ?

*Tor.* In my heart

How couldst thou further fall ?

*Here.* Beyond the reach



Of thy forgiveness! In the soul of thee  
Some spark must live from out the quenchless fire  
That fed upon my image!

*Tor.* Naught remains  
Save the burnt embers!—What wouldst have of me?

*Here.* I would have—thee!

*Tor.* Madman, hast looked on me?  
I am grown hideous! All in me that once  
Was beautiful, my body, thou hast had.  
What else remains? Go, find another woman,  
Fair, even as you knew me. Waste no thought,  
No memory on a dead thing!

*Here.* God of pity,  
Is there no mercy for me?

*Tor.* Go thy way,  
I'll not reproach thee, thou art but a man;  
There is but one more woman born to suffer!  
Go thy way!

*Here.* Hear me!

*Tor.* From another world  
Thy voice comes to me! There is a gulf between us  
As wide and deep as that which separates  
The living from the dead!

*Here.* I'll cross it!

*Tor.* Never  
In this world!

*Here.* Dost defy me? What if force

Compel thee?

*Tor.* What can force compel of me  
Save these poor miserable mortal parts?  
Though thou didst tear the flesh from off this body  
My soul should still escape thee!

*Here.* Silence thee,  
And know me for thy master!  
(*Hereward advances to Torfrida. She shrinks from him*)

*Tor.* Stand back from me!  
*Here.* Nay, thou shalt not escape me! Thou art  
mine!—

God gave thee to me!—  
(*Hereward advances to seize Torfrida. At the same moment a boat touches the bank of the river. ABBOT ULFTEKYL, followed by his Monks and MARTIN, steps on to the bank*)

*Ulf.* Sinner, she is thine  
No longer! God hath taken her back to Him!  
(*Torfrida flings herself into the Abbot's arms. Hereward pauses and bows his head*)  
(*Curtain*)

## ACT IV.

### *Hereward's Castle at Bourne.*

*The Courtyard of the Castle. Low wall at back, over which are seen hills in the distance. A gateway at centre leading on to them. Entrance to Chapel L. Entrance to Dining Hall R. A stone seat down stage left. Alfiruda and Abbot Thorold discovered seated.*

*Tho.* Mine is the only way, his days and nights  
Confounded are in riot and debauch,  
He is besotted, and the brute in him  
Alone survives ! There is no Norman baron  
In all the fenside his vile insolence  
Hath not provoked a blood feud with, he grows  
To be a deadly thorn within our flesh  
That must be gathered !

*Alf.* Is his Majesty  
Acquainted with thy purpose ?

*Tho.* Yea, and the hand  
That hastens his removal may demand  
What recompense it will !

*Alf.* Is there no hand

H

But mine may be the instrument ?

*Tho.* The hand

We use must needs be subtle ! In thy heart

I see thee hesitate, I fear for thee

That thou dost love him still !

*Alf.* Love him ? I hate him !

*Tho.* Thou art not honest !

*Alf.* I consort with thee,

What wouldst thou have me ?

*Tho.* Of more pride, my daughter,

Than to go begging with a love like thine

To one who shudders at thy mere approach,

And shifts his eyes with every changing moment

For fear they fall on thee !

*Alf.* Yea, I have told me

When I have held him fast in my embrace

And found him lifeless and inanimate

As some stone-chiselled statue, it must be

His heart still hugs the image of that other—

Torfrida !

*Tho.* Canst thou doubt it ?

*Alf.* By what spell,

What witchcraft doth she bind him ?

*Tho.* He is formed

So simple, his soul lacketh comprehension

To love aught but a good woman !

*Alf.* And I ?

*Tho.* All that is fair in thee is eloquent  
Of his soul's crime !

*Alf.*                                There are days that I dream  
He loves her still !

*Tho.*                                Thou dreamest all thy days  
That doubt it otherwise !

*Alf.*                                Perchance !

*Tho.*    Go to him,  
Charge him, upon his soul, to tell thee true  
In this particular ! Then shalt thou know  
If I, thy friend, have lied to thee !

*Alf.*    Thou devil !—  
I know where thou wouldst drive me !

*(Hereward suddenly enters at gateway through back,  
fully armed and looking flushed and excited)*

Hereward !—

*(Hereward advances to Thorold)*

*Here.* What dost thou masquerading in God's  
garments,

Thou that art spotted with the plague of Hell !

*Tho.* Beware the license of thy godless tongue  
Provoke me not too far, Lord Hereward !

*Here.* What thunders wilt thou summon down on  
me ?

Thou canst not call on God, and for the devil  
I am as surely signed and sealed to him  
As thou thyself, for all thy livery !

*Tho.* His Majesty shall deal with thee !

*Here.* His Majesty ?

Go, take thee from my sight, else weaponless  
As thou dost stand before me I will do thee  
A mortal injury !

*(Thorold turns to Alfruda)*

*Tho.* Remember !

*Alf.* Go !

*(Thorold exits through gateway at back. Alfruda approaches Hereward)*

Let me unloose thine armour !

*(She divests Hereward of his arms and armour, and places them at back of stage, near the gateway)*

*Here.* Harken to me :

Harbour him not again within these walls  
Or 'twill go ill with thee !

*Alf.* Dost dare to threaten ?

Dost thou not know me ?

*Here.* Do I know thee not ?

Thou that hast robbed me of my soul !

*Alf.* Thou hast none !

*Here.* Nay, but I had one once, ere this vile body  
Consumed and eat it up !

*Alf.* Or drinking !

*Here.* Drinking

If it so please thee name it,—drink, the devil,  
And thee !

*Alf.* Thou shouldst have warned me thou wert seeking  
A nurse in marriage, ere thou cast adrift  
Thine unapproachable, immaculate  
Torfrida !

*Here.* That name on thy lips !

*Alf.* Thus far  
The Heaven thou art fallen from !

*Here.* Provoke me  
No further !

*Alf.* Wouldst thou kill me ?

*Here.* Readily,  
Might I but sink still lower !

*Alf.* Virtue sits  
Becomingly on thee, whose hand already  
Hath worse than killed one woman !

*Here.* Yea, I know it,  
Each generous glance, each gift of her rich self  
That burn like fire in my memory,  
Are twenty thousand damning witnesses  
Whose trumpet-toned accusing tongues cry to me  
"Traitor, betrayer."

*Alf.* This to me !

*Here.* Thy body  
Weighed in the balance is not worth the value  
Of her mere little finger !

*Alf.* Hereward,  
Beware !

*Here.* Beware of what ? The only moment  
Mine eyes dream in their madness they see Heaven  
Are when my thoughts dare raise themselves from earth  
And dwell upon her memory !

*Alf.* I swear  
If thou wilt be more gentle with me, loving,  
Caressing, tender, I will be to thee  
As I have never been !

*(Alfruda puts her arms round Hereward. He un-  
looses them and flings her from him)*

*Here.* Unloose thy hold,  
I suffocate !

*Alf.* Is this thy last word to me ?

*Here.* My last this side the grave !

*Alf.* It shall be so,  
'Tis thou hast said it !

*(Alfruda goes up to the gateway at back, and takes up  
Hereward's arms and armour. He is seated on  
stone bench down stage, and does not see her)*

Yea, the only way !

*(Alfruda gives Hereward one last glance, and then  
exits R. E.)*

*Here.* Thou that dost fear to look on death, I tell  
thee

'Tis not the sting of death is terrible,  
But the long lash of life ! The while we live  
We have the constant sense to feel, and life



And suffering become as one ! Mine agony  
 Grows daily, yet I dare not die, her eyes  
 Follow me still, and each poor trivial action  
 Standeth approved, or else condemned by them !  
 Her little hand had raised me up to Heaven  
 And my hand struck her down to earth ! Her god  
 Fallen so low ! O man most miserable !  
 I sometimes dream the devil rules at birth,  
 And brings us into being, that 'tis God  
 Greatly compassionate looks down on us  
 And takes us hence by death ! Sin such as mine  
 Goes shrieking through the world and finds no pardon,  
 I am outside the pale, and for my punishment  
 Am chained to earth and am condemned to live !  
 Oh God, if thou be merciful, look down  
 Upon this sinner overwhelmed, and grant to him  
 Thy great release !

*(WINTER enters through the gateway at back, and  
 comes down stage)*

*Win.* Hereward ! Hereward !

*Here.* Thou, Winter !

*Win.* Yea ! Thou knowest since the wrong  
 Thou didst to her I had no heart in me  
 To look upon thy face again !

*Here.* She loved thee,  
 She said that thou wert honest, thou and Geri !

*Win.* And we loved her !

*Here.* Enough ! What is thine errand ?  
Speak and begone !

*Win.* Let me sit here with thee,  
A something bids me come to thee to-day !  
Thou art alone !—

*Here.* Yea, I am all alone  
Save for one thought ! Hast ever seen a beggar,  
Head buried in his hands, his soul and body  
Stricken to numbness, while he huddled lies  
Upon a busy city way, his fellows  
Passing him heedless by, without one word  
Of help or pity ? That poor beggar man  
Is not more lone than I that dwell and move  
Amid these people ! Winter, once thou loved me,  
My bolt is sped—my worst is well-nigh ended,  
I am a dead man !

*Win.* Say not so !

*Here.* I suffer  
Worse than the tortures of the damned ! Dost know  
What it is to be haunted night and day  
By those pale ghosts of women whose sad eyes  
Look forth from out the past upon the men  
That have betrayed and wronged them ? They ne'er  
speak,  
Their lips ne'er move, they only look on us  
From out the hollows of their hearts ! Oh, Winter,  
Within that look their terror lies, it strikes

As death upon the conscience-stricken soul,  
Thou shalt not fly from it !—Though thou didst bury  
Thy head beneath the earth 'twould follow thee,  
And such a look is on me now !

*Win.*

Hast had

No word, no message from her ?

*Here.*

Yea, the armour

I won when courting her, and had returned  
To Crowland, came back to me, with a prayer  
I would accept it for her sake, and with it  
Her blessing !

*Win.*

Hereward !

*Here.*

Whene'er mine eyes

Behold that pale form fashioned from my sin,  
Kneeling amid the gravelike silences  
That crown those cloisters, in my soul I know me  
The greatest coward that draws breath ! Long since  
Would I have snapped the thread of suffering  
But that the thought that she still lived controlled me  
And held my hand !

*Win.*

She would have wished it so,

Doubt not a moment !

*Here.*

Yea, I seek to think

As she would think ! When our two thoughts are one,  
I know my way lies clear before me !

*Win.*

Surely

Thou'lt meet again ?

*Here.* My soul hath sinned too deeply  
To meet her soul in this world ! It may be  
Another world awaits us !

*Win.* Dost thou live  
For nothing ?

*Here.* Nay, I live upon the hope  
The hand of man may be more merciful  
Than mine dare be unto myself !—I wait !—  
I wait !

*Win.* Oh, Hereward !

*Here.* I know not how,  
But a presentiment, the most supreme  
That man may know, is knocking at my soul,  
And telling me—release will come !

*(Knocking heard without)*

*Win.* Didst hear ?  
'Twas like an answer !

*Here.* Who knocks ?

*Voice without.* Let me in !

*Here.* That voice ! 'Tis Taillebois !

*Win.* Treachery !

*Here.* Mine armour !—  
Mine arms, 'tis she hath stolen them !—

*(Hereward looks round, sees his armour missing, and  
seeks to pass through the gateway at the back)*

*Win.* Hold ! Hold !

*Here.* Let me pass first !

*Win.* Thou shalt not !  
*(Winter slips through the door and closes it behind him.*  
*He calls from outside)*

Hereward !  
Thou art betrayed ! I am a dead man !

*Here.* Winter !  
I will avenge thee !

*(Hereward snatches up a spear and shield that are leaning against the wall. At the same moment Ivo Taillebois, Ascelin, Raoul De Dol, and other Norman Knights and Men-at-arms rush through the gateway and attack him)*

*Taill.* So thou art asleep  
At last, Sir Wake !

*Here.* Unarmed, thou ratcatcher !  
'Tis only thus or sleeping thou dare draw  
Upon a man !

*Asc.* Have at thee !  
*(They all attack Hereward)*

*Here.* Murderers !  
Mercy is in thy blows !

*Normans.* A Wake ! A Wake !  
*(A Norman Knight strikes him in the back)*

*Here.* O woman ! Woman ! Flower of all women !—  
Torfrida !

*(As Hereward falls, he flings his shield full in the face of Raoul de Dol, who tumbles to the ground)*

*Taill.* Look! He stirs not! He is dead!  
Arise, Raoul!

*Asc.* He never will rise more,  
'Twas the Wake's last blow!

*(He leans over Raoul and finds him dead)*

*Taill.* Take us hence, our task  
Is ended!

*(Taillebois, Ascelin, and the other Normans take their way through the gateway at back. After a pause, ALFTRUDA appears at entrance R. She approaches Hereward, shudders, and runs up to the gateway left open by the Normans. As she is shutting it, she sees a train of Monks approaching down the hill, with Torfrida at their head)*

*Alf.* From yonder hill a train of monks descending!—  
And the pale nun in black who headeth them  
Pointeth them hither!—Who is she would claim  
him?

Is he not mine, in life, in death?

*(Alftruda retreats from the gateway and sits beside the body of Hereward. TORFRIDA enters, followed by the Monks, and confronts her)*

*Tor.* Where lies  
The body of my lord?

*Alf.* Thy lord?

*Tor.* Thine only  
While he had power to sin! He sins no longer!

Yield me up what is mine !

*Alf.*

I will not !

*Tor.*

Woman !

Within this wanton, witching body of thee  
The blood still runs warm, on thy cheek the color  
Still kindles that can catch the souls of men  
As his was caught—and hurl them to perdition—  
Fever of life, thy place is with the living,  
What dost thou with the dead ?

*Alf.*

Ah !

*Tor.*

Fly from me

As from the silence of eternal sleep,  
The shadow of the tomb ! My touch upon thee  
Is as the grave ! 'Tis Death !

*(Torfrida lays her hand on the forehead of Alfruda,  
who shudders and flies through the gateway)*

Take up his body !

*(The Monks approach Hereward. Torfrida looks  
down upon him)*

*(Martin Lightfoot kneels beside Hereward)*

*Mar.* Oh, Hereward, thou foolish, foolish gold  
head,

Thou wouldst not let me warn thee ! In her keeping  
All will be well with thee again ! Sleep softly,  
Sleep very softly.

*(Martin stoops and kisses Hereward's hand)*

*Tor.*

Though our sinful bodies